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SAINT PAULS.

MARCH, 1871.

WILFRID CUMBERMEDE.

An Autobiographical Story.

BY GEORGE MAC DONALD, AUTHOR OF "ALEC FORBES," ETC.

CHAPTER XVII.

AMONG THE MOUNTAINS.

ONE summer morning, we all got up very early, except Charley, who was unfit for the exertion, to have a ramble in the mountains, and see the sun rise. The fresh friendly air, full of promise, greeting us the moment we crossed the threshold ; the calm light which without visible source, lay dream-like on the hills ; the brighter space in the sky whence ere long the spring of glory would burst forth triumphant ; the dull white of the snow-peaks, dwelling so awful and lonely in the mid heavens, as if nothing should ever comfort them or make them acknowledge the valleys below ; the sense of adventure with which we climbed the nearer heights as familiar to our feet on ordinary days as the stairs to our bedrooms ; the gradual disappearance of the known regions behind us, and the dawning sense of the illimitable and awful, folding in its bosom the homely and familiar—combined to produce an impression which has never faded. The sun rose in splendour, as if nothing more should hide in the darkness for ever ; and yet with the light came a fresh sense of mystery, for now that which had appeared smooth, was all broken and mottled with shadows innumerable. Again and again I found myself standing still to gaze in a rapture of delight which I can only recall, not express ; again and again was I roused by the voice of the master in front, shouting to me to come on, and warning me of the danger of losing sight of the rest of the company ; and again and again I obeyed, but without any perception of the peril.

The intention was to cross the hills into the valley of the Lauter-

brunnen, not however by the path now so well known, but by another way, hardly a path, with which the master and some of the boys were familiar enough. It was my first experience of anything like real climbing. As we passed rapidly over a moorland space, broken with huge knolls and solitary rocks, something hurt my foot, and taking off my shoe, I found that a small chiropodical operation was necessary, which involved the use of my knife. It slipped, and cut my foot, and I bound the wound with a strip from my pocket-handkerchief. When I got up, I found that my companions had disappeared. This gave me little trouble at the moment, for I had no doubt of speedily overtaking them; and I set out briskly in the direction, as I supposed, in which we had been going. But I presume that instead of following them, I began at once to increase the distance between us. At all events, I had not gone far before a pang of fear shot through me—the first awaking doubt. I called—louder—and louder yet; but there was no response, and I knew I was alone.

Invaded by sudden despair, I sat down, and for a moment did not even think. All at once I became aware of the abysses which surrounded the throne of my isolation. Behind me the broken ground rose to an unseen height, and before me it sloped gently downwards, without a break to the eye, yet I felt as if, should I make one wavering movement, I must fall down one of the frightful precipices which Mr. Forest had told me as a warning, lay all about us. I actually clung to the stone upon which I sat, although I could not have been in more absolute safety for the moment had I been dreaming in bed. The old fear had returned upon me, with a tenfold feeling of reality behind it. I presume it is so all through life: it is not what is, but what may be, that oftenest blanches the cheek and paralyses the limbs; and oftenest gives rise to that sense of the need of a God which we are told nowadays is a superstition, and which he whom we call the Saviour acknowledged and justified in telling us to take no thought for the morrow, inasmuch as God took thought for it. I strove to master my dismay, and forced myself to get up and run about; and in a few minutes the fear had withdrawn into the background, and I felt no longer an unseen force dragging me towards a frightful gulf. But it was replaced by a more spiritual horror. The sense of loneliness seized upon me, and the first sense of absolute loneliness is awful. Independent as a man may fancy himself in the heart of a world of men, he has only to be convinced that there is neither voice nor hearing, to know that the face from which he most recoils, is of a kind essential to his very soul. Space is not room; and when we complain of the overcrowding of our fellows, we are thankless for that which comforts us the most, and desire its absence in ignorance of our deepest nature.

Not even a bird broke the silence. It lay upon my soul as the sky and the sea lay upon the weary eye of the ancient mariner. It is useless to attempt to convey the impression of my misery. It was not yet the fear of death, or of hunger or thirst, for I had as yet no adequate idea of the vast lonelinesses that lie in a mountain land : it was simply the being alone, with no ear to hear and no voice to answer me—a torture to which the soul is liable in virtue of the fact that it was not made to be alone, yea, I think, I hope, never can be alone ; for that which could be fact could not be such horror. Essential horror springs from an idea repugnant to the nature of the thinker, and which therefore in reality could not be.

My agony rose and rose with every moment of silence. But when it reached its height, and when, to save myself from bursting into tears, I threw myself on the ground, and began gnawing at the plants about me—then first came help : I had a certain *experience*, as the Puritans might have called it. I fear to build any definite conclusions upon it, from the dread of fanaticism and the danger of attributing a merely physical effect to a spiritual cause. But are matter and spirit so far asunder ? It is my will moves my arm, whatever first moves my will. Beside, I do not understand how, except another influence came into operation, the extreme of misery and depression should work round into such a change as I have to record.

But I do not know how to describe the change. The silence was crushing or rather sucking my life out of me—up into its own empty gulfs. The horror of the great stillness was growing deathly, when all at once, I rose to my feet, with a sense of power and confidence I had never had before. It was as if something divine within me awoke to outface the desolation. I felt that it was time to act, and that I could act. There is no cure for terror like action : in a few moments I could have approached the verge of any precipice—at least without abject fear. The silence—no longer a horrible vacancy—appeared to tremble with unuttered thinkings. The manhood within me was alive and awake. I could not recognize a single landmark, or discover the least vestige of a path. I knew upon which hand the sun was when we started ; and took my way with the sun on the other side. But a cloud had already come over him.

I had not gone far before I saw in front of me, on the other side of a little hillock, something like the pale blue gray fog that broods over a mountain lake. I ascended the hillock, and started back with a cry of dismay : I was on the very verge of an awful gulf. When I think of it, I marvel yet that I did not lose my self-possession altogether. I only turned and strode in the other direction—the faster for the fear. But I dared not run, for I was haunted by precipices. Over every height, every mound, one might be lying—a trap for my destruction. I no longer looked out in the hope of recognizing some

feature of the country ; I could only regard the ground before me, lest at any step I might come upon an abyss.

I had not walked far before the air began to grow dark. I glanced again at the sun. The clouds had gathered thick about him. Suddenly a mountain wind blew cold in my face. I never yet can read that sonnet of Shakspere's,—

Full many a glorious morning have I seen
 Flatter the mountain tops with sovereign eye,
Kissing with golden face the meadows green,
 Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy ;
Anon permit the basest clouds to ride
 With ugly rack on his celestial face,
And from the forlorn world his visage hide,
 Stealing unseen to west with this disgrace,—

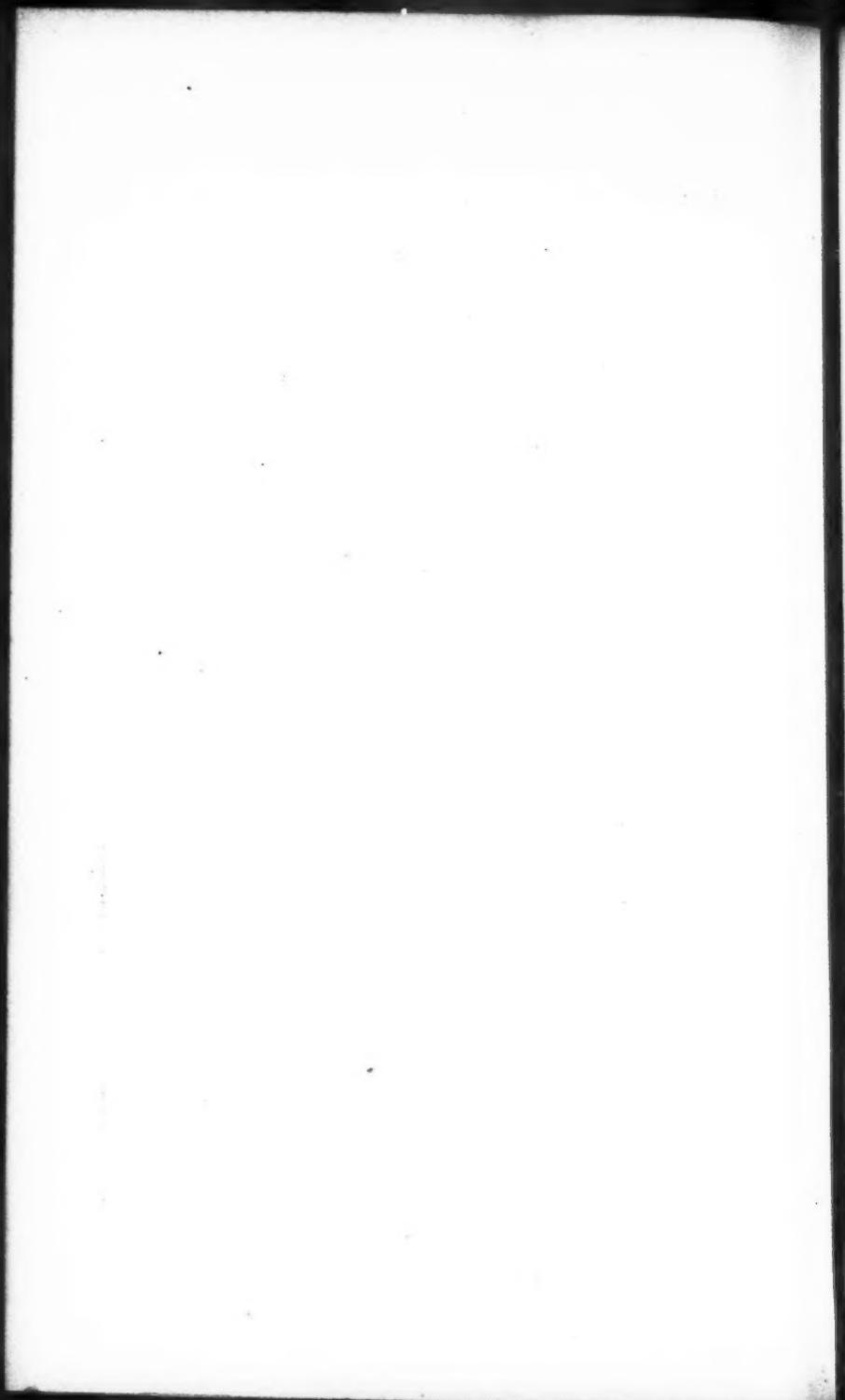
without recalling the gladness when I started from home and the misery that so soon followed. But my new spirits did not yet give way. I trudged on. The wind increased, and in it came by and by the trailing skirts of a cloud. In a few moments more I was wrapped in mist. It was as if the gulf from which I had just escaped had sent up its indwelling demon of fog to follow and overtake me. I dared hardly go on even with the greatest circumspection. As I grew colder, my courage declined. The mist wetted my face and sank through my clothes, and I began to feel very wretched. I sat down, not merely from dread of the precipices, but to reserve my walking powers when the mist should withdraw. I began to shiver, and was getting utterly hopeless and miserable when the fog lifted a little, and I saw what seemed a great rock near me. I crept towards it. Almost suddenly it dwindled, and I found but a stone, yet one large enough to afford me some shelter. I went to the leeward side of it, and nestled at its foot. The mist again sank and the wind blew stronger, but I was in comparative comfort, partly because my imagination was wearied. I fell fast asleep.

I awoke stiff with cold. Rain was falling in torrents, and I was wet to the skin ; but the mist was much thinner, and I could see a good way. For a while I was very heartless, what with the stiffness, and the fear of having to spend the night on the mountains. I was hungry too, not with the appetite of desire but of need. The worst was that I had no idea in what direction I ought to go. Downwards lay precipices—upwards lay the surer loneliness. I knelt, and prayed the God who dwelt in the silence to help me ; then strode away I knew not whither—up the hill in the faint hope of discovering some sign to direct me. As I climbed the hill rose. When I surmounted what had seemed the highest point, away beyond rose another. But the slopes were not over steep, and I was able to get on pretty fast. The wind being behind me, I hoped for some shelter



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over the highest brow, but that, for anything I knew, might be miles away in the regions of ice and snow.

I had been walking I should think about an hour, when the mist broke away from around me, and the sun, in the midst of clouds of dull orange and gold, shone out upon the wet hill. It was like a promise of safety, and woke in me courage to climb the steep and crumbling slope which now lay before me. But the fear returned. People had died in the mountains of hunger, and I began to make up my mind to meet the worst. I had not learned that the approach of any fate is just the preparation for that fate. I troubled myself with the care of that which was not impending over me. I tried to contemplate the death-struggle with equanimity, but could not. Had I been wearier and fainter, it would have appeared less dreadful. Then, in the horror of the slow death of hunger, strange as it may appear, that which had been the special horror of my childish dreams returned upon me changed into a thought of comfort: I could, ere my strength failed me utterly, seek the verge of a precipice, lie down there, and when the suffering grew strong enough to give me courage, roll myself over the edge, and cut short the agony.

At length I gained the brow of the height, and at last the ground sank beyond. There was no precipice to terrify, only a somewhat steep descent into a valley large and wide. But what a vision arose on the opposite side of that valley!—an upright wilderness of rocks, slopes, precipices, snow, glaciers, avalanches! Weary and faint as I was, I was filled with a glorious awe, the terror of which was the opposite of fear, for it lifted instead of debasing the soul. Not a pine-tree softened the haggard waste; not a single stray sheep of the wind's flock, drew one trail of its thin-drawn wool behind it; all was hard and bare. The glaciers lay like the skins of cruel beasts, with the green veins yet visible, nailed to the rocks to harden in the sun; and the little streams which ran down from their claws looked like the knife-blades they are, keen and hard and shining, sawing away at the bones of the old mountain. But although the mountain looked so silent, there came from it every now and then, a thunderous sound. At first I could not think what it was, but gazing at its surface more steadily, upon the face of a slope I caught sight of what seemed a larger stream than any of the rest; but it soon ceased to flow, and after came the thunder of its fall: it was a stream, but a solid one—an avalanche. Away up in the air the huge snow-summit glittered in the light of the afternoon sun. I was gazing on the Maiden in one of her most savage moods—or to speak prose—I was regarding one of the wildest aspects of the many-sided Jungfrau.

Half way down the hill, almost right under my feet, rose a slender column of smoke, I could not see whence. I hastened towards it,

feeling as strong as when I started in the morning. I zig-zagged down the slope, for it was steep and slippery with grass, and arrived at length at a good-sized cottage, which faced the Jungfrau. It was built of great logs laid horizontally one above the other, all with notches half through near the end, by which notches, lying into each other, the sides of the house were held together at the corners. I soon saw it must be a sort of roadside inn. There was no one about the place, but passing through a dark vestibule, in which were stores of fodder and various utensils, I came to a room in which sat a mother and her daughter, the former spinning, the latter making lace on a pillow. In at the windows looked the great Jungfrau. The room was lined with planks; the floor was boarded; the ceiling too was of boards—pine-wood all around.

The women rose when I entered. I knew enough of German to make them understand my story, and had learned enough of their patois to understand them a little in return. They looked concerned, and the older woman passing her hands over my jacket, turned to her daughter and commenced a talk much too rapid and no doubt idiomatic for me to follow. It was in the end mingled with much laughter, evidently at some proposal of the mother. Then the daughter left the room, and the mother began to heap wood on the fire. In a few minutes, the daughter returned still laughing, with some garments, which the mother took from her. I was watching everything from a corner of the hearth, where I had seated myself wearily. The mother came up to me, and without speaking, put something over my head, which I found to be a short petticoat such as the women wore; then told me I must take off my clothes and have them dried at the fire. She laid other garments on a chair beside me.

"I don't know how to put them on," I objected.

"Put on as many as you can," she said laughing—"and I will help you with the rest."

I looked about. There was a great press in the room. I went behind it and pulled off my clothes; and having managed to put on some of the girl's garments, issued from my concealment. The kindly laughter was renewed, and mother and daughter busied themselves in arranging my apparel, evidently seeking to make the best of me as a girl, an attempt favoured by my pale face. When I seemed to myself completely arrayed, the girl said to her mother what I took to mean "Let us finish what we have begun;" and leaving the room, returned presently with the velvet collar embroidered with silver and the pendent chains which the women of most of the cantons wear, and put it on me, hooking the chains and leaving them festooned under my arms. The mother was spreading out my clothes before the fire to dry.

Neither was pretty, but both looked womanly and good. The

daughter had the attraction of youth and bright eyes; the mother of goodwill and experience; but both were sallow, and the mother very wrinkled for what seemed her years.

"Now," I said, summoning my German, "you've almost finished your work. Make my short hair as like your long hair as you can, and then I shall be a Swiss girl."

I was but a boy, and had no scruple concerning a bit of fun of which I might have been ashamed a few years later. The girl took a comb from her own hair and arranged mine. When she had finished,

"One girl may kiss another," I said; and doubtless she understood me, for she returned my kiss with a fresh laugh. I sat down by the fire, and as its warmth crept into my limbs, I rejoiced over comforts which yesterday had been a matter of course.

Meantime they were busy getting me something to eat. Just as they were setting it on the table, however, a loud call outside took them both away. In a few moments two other guests entered, and then first I found myself ashamed of my costume. With them the mother re-entered, calling behind her, "There's nobody at home; you must put the horses up yourself, Annel." Then she moved the little table towards me, and proceeded to set out the meal.

"Ah! I see you have got something to eat," said one of the strangers, in a voice I fancied I had heard before.

"Will you please to share it?" returned the woman, moving the table again towards the middle of the room.

I thought with myself that, if I kept silent, no one could tell I was not a girl; and, the table being finally adjusted, I moved my seat towards it. Meantime the man was helping his companion to take off her outer garments, and put them before the fire. I saw the face of neither until they approached the table and sat down. Great was my surprise to discover that the man was the same I had met in the wood on my way to Moldwarp Hall, and that the girl was Clara—a good deal grown—in fact looking almost a woman. From after facts, the meeting became less marvellous in my eyes than it then appeared.

I felt myself in an awkward position—indeed I felt almost guilty, although any notion of having the advantage of them never entered my head. I was more than half inclined to run out and help Annel with the horses, but I was very hungry, and not at all willing to postpone my meal, simple as it was—bread and butter, eggs, cheese, milk, and a bottle of the stronger wine of the country, tasting like a coarse sherry. The two—father and daughter evidently—talked about their journey, and hoped they should reach the Grindelwald without more rain.

"By the way," said the gentleman, "it's somewhere not far from here young Cumbermede is at school. I know Mr. Forest well

enough—used to know him at least. We may as well call upon him."

"Cumbermede"—said Clara; "who is he?"

"A nephew of Mrs. Wilson's—no not nephew—second or third cousin—or something of the sort, I believe.—Didn't somebody tell me you met him at the Hall one day?"

"Oh that boy—Wilfrid. Yes; I told you myself. Don't you remember what a bit of fun we had the night of the ball? We were shut out on the leads, you know."

"Yes, to be sure, you did tell me. What sort of a boy is he?"

"Oh! I don't know. Much like other boys. I did think he was a coward at first, but he showed some pluck at last. I shouldn't wonder if he turns out a good sort of fellow! We *were* in a fix!"

"You're a terrible madcap, Clara! If you don't settle down as you grow, you'll be getting yourself into worse scrapes."

"Not with you to look after me, papa dear," answered Clara, smiling. "It was the fun of cheating old Goody Wilson, you know!"

Her father grinned with his whole mouthful of teeth, and looked at her with amusement—almost sympathetic roguery, which she evidently appreciated, for she laughed heartily.

Meantime I was feeling very uncomfortable. Something within told me I had no right to overhear remarks about myself; and, in my slow way, I was meditating how to get out of the scrape.

"What a nice-looking girl that is!" said Clara, without lifting her eyes from her plate—"I mean for a Swiss, you know. But I do like the dress. I wish you would buy me a collar and chains like those, papa."

"Always wanting to get something out of your old dad, Clara! Just like the rest of you!—always wanting something—eh?"

"No, papa; it's you gentlemen always want to keep everything for yourselves. We only want you to share."

"Well, you shall have the collar, and I shall have the chains.—Will that do?"

"Yes, thank you, papa," she returned, nodding her head. "Meantime, hadn't you better give me your diamond pin? It would fasten this troublesome collar so nicely!"

"There child!" he answered, proceeding to take it from his shirt. "Anything else?"

"No, no, papa dear. I didn't want it. I expected you, like everybody else, to decline carrying out your professed principles."

"What a nice girl she is," I thought, "after all!"

"My love," said her father, "you will know some day that I would do more for you even than give you my pet diamond. If you are a good girl, and do as I tell you, there will be grander things than diamond pins in store for you. But you may have this if you like."

He looked fondly at her as he spoke.

"Oh, no, papa!—not now at least. I should not know what to do with it. I should be sure to lose it."

If my clothes had been dry, I would have slipped away, put them on, and appeared in my proper guise. As it was, I was getting more and more miserable—ashamed of revealing who I was, and ashamed of hearing what the speakers supposed I did not understand. I sat on irresolute. In a little while however, either the wine having got into my head, or the food and warmth having restored my courage, I began to contemplate the bolder stroke of suddenly revealing myself by some unexpected remark. They went on talking about the country, and the road they had come.

"But we have hardly seen anything worth calling a precipice," said Clara.

"You'll see hundreds of them if you look out of the window," said her father.

"Oh! but I don't mean that," she returned. "It's nothing to look at them like that. I mean from the top of them—to look down, you know."

"Like from the flying buttress at Moldwarp Hall, Clara?" I said.

The moment I began to speak, they began to stare. Clara's hand was arrested on its way towards the bread, and her father's wine-glass hung suspended between the table and his lips. I laughed.

"By Jove!" said Mr. Coningham—and added nothing, for amazement, but looked uneasily at his daughter, as if asking whether they had not said something awkward about me.

"It's Wilfrid!" exclaimed Clara, in the tone of one talking in her sleep. Then she laid down her knife, and laughed aloud.

"What a guy you are!" she exclaimed. "Who would have thought of finding you in a Swiss girl? Really it was too bad of you to sit there and let us go on as we did. I do believe we were talking about your precious self! At least papa was."

Again her merry laugh rang out. She could not have taken a better way of relieving us.

"I'm very sorry," I said; "but I felt so awkward in this costume that I couldn't bring myself to speak before. I tried very hard."

"Poor boy!" she returned, rather more mockingly than I liked, her violets swimming in the dews of laughter.

By this time Mr. Coningham had apparently recovered his self-possession. I say *apparently*, for I doubt if he had ever lost it. He had only, I think, been running over their talk in his mind to see if he had said anything unpleasant, and now, reassured, I think, he stretched his hand across the table.

"At all events, Mr. Cumbermede," he said, "we owe you an apology. I am sure we can't have said any thing we should mind you hearing; but——"

"Oh!" I interrupted, "you have told me nothing I did not know already, except that Mrs. Wilson was a relation, of which I was quite ignorant."

"It is true enough though."

"What relation is she then?"

"I think, when I gather my recollections of the matter—I think she was first cousin to your mother—perhaps it was only second cousin."

"Why shouldn't she have told me so then?"

"She must explain that herself. I cannot account for that. It is very extraordinary."

"But how do you know so well about me, sir—if you don't mind saying?"

"Oh! I am old friend of the family. I knew your father better than your uncle though. Your uncle is not over friendly, you see."

"I am sorry for that."

"No occasion at all. I suppose he doesn't like me. I fancy, being a Methodist —"

"My uncle is not a Methodist, I assure you. He goes to the parish church regularly."

"Oh! it's all one. I only meant to say that being a man of somewhat peculiar notions, I supposed he did not approve of my profession. Your good people are just as ready as others, however, to call in the lawyer when they fancy their rights invaded. Ha! ha! But no one has a right to complain of another because he doesn't choose to like him. Besides it brings grist to the mill. If everybody liked everybody, what would become of the lawsuits? And that would unsuit us—wouldn't it, Clara?"

"You know, papa dear, what mamma would say?"

"But she ain't here, you know."

"But I am, papa; and I don't like to hear you talk shop," said Clara coaxingly.

"Very well; we won't, then. But I was only explaining to Mr. Cumbermede how I supposed it was that his uncle did not like me. There was no offence in that, I hope, Mr. Cumbermede?"

"Certainly not," I answered. "I am the only offender. But I was innocent enough as far as intention goes. I came in drenched and cold, and the good people here amused themselves dressing me like a girl. It is quite time I were getting home now. Mr. Forest will be in a way about me. So will Charley Osborne."

"Oh yes," said Mr. Coningham, "I remember hearing you were at school together somewhere in this quarter. But tell us all about it. Did you lose your way?"

I told them my story. Even Clara looked grave when I came to the incident of finding myself on the verge of the precipice.

"Thank God, my boy!" said Mr. Coningham kindly. "You have had a narrow escape. I lost myself once in the Cumberland hills, and hardly got off with my life. Here it is a chance you were ever seen again, alive or dead. I wonder you're not knocked up."

I was however more so than I knew.

"How are you going to get home?" he asked.

"I don't know any way but walking," I answered.

"Are you far from home?"

"I don't know. I daresay the people here will be able to tell me. But I think you said you were going down into the Grindelwald. I shall know where I am there. Perhaps you will let me walk with you. Horses can't go very fast along these roads."

"You shall have my horse, my boy."

"No. I couldn't think of that."

"You must. I haven't been wandering all day like you. You can ride, I suppose?"

"Yes, pretty well."

"Then you shall ride with Clara, and I'll walk with the guide. I shall go and see after the horses presently."

It was indeed a delightful close to a dreadful day. We sat and chatted a while, and then Clara and I went out to look at the Jungfrau. She told me they had left her mother at Interlaken, and had been wandering about the Bernese Alps for nearly a week.

"I can't think what should have put it in papa's head," she added; "for he does not care much for scenery. I fancy he wants to make the most of poor me, and so takes me the grand tour. He wanted to come without mamma, but she said we were not to be trusted alone. She had to give in when we took to horseback, though."

It was getting late, and Mr. Coningham came out to find us.

"It is quite time we were going," he said. "In fact we are too late now. The horses are ready, and your clothes are dry, Mr. Cumbermede. I have felt them all over."

"How kind of you, sir!" I said.

"Nonsense. Why should any one want another to get his death of cold? If you are to keep alive, it's better to keep well as long as ever you can. Make haste though, and change your clothes."

I hurried away, followed by Clara's merry laugh at my clumsy gait. In a few moments I was ready. Mr. Coningham had settled my bill for me. Mother and daughter gave me a kind farewell, and I exhausted my German in vain attempts to let them know how grateful I was for their goodness. There was not much time however to spend even on gratitude. The sun was nearly down, and I could see Clara mounted and waiting for me before the window. I found Mr. Coningham rather impatient.

"Come along, Mr. Cumbermede; we must be off," he said. "Get up there."

"You *have* grown though after all," said Clara. "I thought it might be only the petticoats that made you look so tall."

I got on the horse which the guide, a half-witted fellow from the next valley, was holding for me, and we set out. The guide walked beside my horse, and Mr. Coningham beside Clara's. The road was level for a little way, but it soon turned up on the hill where I had been wandering, and went along the steep side of it.

"Will this do for a precipice, Clara?" said her father.

"Oh! dear no," she answered; "it's not worth the name. It actually slopes outward."

Before we got down to the next level stretch it began again to rain. A mist came on, and we could see but a little way before us. Through the mist came the sound of the bells of the cattle upon the hill. Our guide trudged carefully but boldly on. He seemed to know every step of the way. Clara was very cool, her father a little anxious, and very attentive to his daughter, who received his help with a never-failing merry gratitude, making light of all annoyances. At length we came down upon the better road, and travelled on with more comfort.

"Look, Clara!" I said—"will that do?"

"What is it?" she asked, turning her head in the direction in which I pointed.

On our right, through the veil, half of rain, half of gauzy mist, which filled the air, arose a precipice indeed—the whole bulk it was of the Eiger mountain, which the mist brought so near that it seemed literally to overhang the road. Clara looked up for a moment, but betrayed no sign of awe.

"Yes, I think that will do," she said.

"Though you are only at the foot of it?" I suggested.

"Yes; though I am only at the foot of it," she repeated.

"What does it remind you of?" I asked.

"Nothing. Never saw anything it could remind me of," she answered.

"Nor read anything?"

"Not that I remember."

"It reminds me of Mount Sinai in the Pilgrim's Progress. You remember Christian was afraid because the side of it which was next the wayside did hang so much over that he thought it would fall on his head."

"I never read the Pilgrim's Progress," she returned, in a careless if not contemptuous tone.

"Didn't you? Oh, you would like it so much!"

"I don't think I should. I don't like religious books."

"But that is such a good story!"

"Oh! it's all a trap—sugar on the outside of a pill! The sting's in the tail of it. They're all like that. I know them."

This silenced me, and for a while we went on without speaking.

The rain ceased ; the mist cleared a little ; and I began to think I saw some landmarks I knew. A moment more, and I perfectly understood where we were.

"I'm all right now, sir," I said to Mr. Coningham. "I can find my way from here."

As I spoke I pulled up and proceeded to dismount.

"Sit still," he said. "We cannot do better than ride on to Mr. Forest's. I don't know him much, but I have met him, and in a strange country all are friends. I daresay he will take us in for the night. Do you think he could house us ?"

"I have no doubt of it. For that matter, the boys could crowd a little."

"Is it far from here ?"

"Not above two miles, I think."

"Are you sure you know the way ?"

"Quite sure."

"Then you take the lead."

I did so. He spoke to the guide, and Clara and I rode on in front.

"You and I seem destined to have adventures together, Clara," I said.

"It seems so. But this is not so much of an adventure as that night on the leads," she answered.

"You would not have thought so if you had been with me in the morning."

"Were you very much frightened ?"

"I was. And then to think of finding you !"

"It was funny, certainly."

When we reached the house, there was great jubilation over me, but Mr. Forest himself was very serious. He had not been back more than half an hour, and was just getting ready to set out again, accompanied by men from the village below. Most of the boys were quite knocked up, for they had been looking for me ever since they missed me. Charley was in a dreadful way. When he saw me he burst into tears, and declared he would never let me go out of his sight again. But if he had been with me, it would have been death to both of us : I could never have got him over the ground.

Mr. and Mrs. Forest received their visitors with the greatest cordiality, and invited them to spend a day or two with them, to which, after some deliberation, Mr. Coningham agreed.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AGAIN THE ICE-CAVE.

THE next morning he begged a holiday for me and Charley, of whose family he knew something although he was not acquainted with them. I was a little disappointed at Charley's being included in the request, not in the least from jealousy, but because I had set my heart on taking Clara to the cave in the ice, which I knew Charley would not like. But I thought we could easily arrange to leave him somewhere near until we returned. I spoke to Mr. Coningham about it, who entered into my small scheme with the greatest kindness. Charley confided to me afterwards that he did not take to him—he was too like an ape, he said. But the impression of his ugliness had with me quite worn off; and for his part, if I had been a favourite nephew, he could not have been more complaisant and hearty.

I felt very stiff when we set out, and altogether not quite myself; but the discomfort wore off as we went. Charley had Mr. Coningham's horse, and I walked by the side of Clara's, eager after any occasion, if but a pretence, of being useful to her. She was quite familiar with me, but seemed shy of Charley. He looked much more of a man than I; for not only, as I have said, had he grown much during his illness, but there was an air of troubled thoughtfulness about him which made him look considerably older than he really was; while his delicate complexion and large blue eyes had a kind of mystery about them that must have been very attractive.

When we reached the village, I told Charley that we wanted to go on foot to the cave, and hoped he would not mind waiting our return. But he refused to be left, declaring he should not mind going in the least; that he was quite well now, and ashamed of his behaviour on the former occasion; that, in fact, it must have been his approaching illness that caused it. I could not insist, and we set out. The footpath led us through fields of corn, with a bright sun overhead, and a sweet wind blowing. It was a glorious day of golden corn, gentle wind, and blue sky—with great masses of white snow, whiter than any cloud, held up in it.

We descended the steep bank; we crossed the wooden bridge over the little river; we crunched under our feet the hail-like crystals lying rough on the surface of the glacier; we reached the cave, and entered the blue abyss. I went first into the delicious, yet dangerous-looking blue. The cave had several sharp angles in it. When I reached the farthest corner I turned to look behind me. I was alone. I walked back and peeped round the last corner. Between that and the one beyond it stood Clara and Charley—staring at each other with faces of ghastly horror.

Clara's look certainly could not have been the result of any excess of imagination. But many women respond easily to influences they could not have originated. My conjecture is that the same horror had again seized upon Charley when he saw Clara; that it made his face, already deathlike, tenfold more fearful; that Clara took fright at his fear, her imagination opening like a crystal to the polarized light of reflected feeling; and thus they stood in the paralysis of a dismay which ever multiplied itself in the opposed mirrors of their countenances.

I too was in terror—for Charley, and certainly wasted no time in speculation. I went forward instantly, and put an arm round each. They woke up, as it were, and tried to laugh. But the laugh was worse than the stare. I hurried them out of the place.

We came upon Mr. Coningham round the next corner, amusing himself with the talk of the half-silly guide.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"Out again," I answered. "The air is oppressive."

"Nonsense," he said merrily. "The air is as pure as it is cold. Come, Clara; I want to explore the penetralia of this temple of Isis."

I believe he intended a pun.

Clara turned with him; Charley and I went out into the sunshine.

"You should not have gone, Charley. You have caught a chill again," I said.

"No, nothing of the sort," he answered. "Only it was too dreadful. That lovely face! To see it like that—and know that is what it is coming to!"

"You looked as horrid yourself," I returned.

"I don't doubt it. We all did. But why?"

"Why, just because of the blueness," I answered.

"Yes—the blueness, no doubt. That was all. But there it was, you know."

Clara came out smiling. All her horror had vanished. I was looking into the hole as she turned the last corner. When she first appeared, her face was "like one that hath been seven days drowned;" but as she advanced, the decay thinned, and the life grew, until at last she stepped from the mouth of the sepulchre in all the glow of her merry youth. It was a dumb show of the resurrection.

As we went back to the inn, Clara, who was walking in front with her father, turned her head and addressed me suddenly.

"You see it was all a sham, Wilfrid!" she said.

"What was a sham? I don't know what you mean," I rejoined.

"Why that," she returned, pointing with her hand. Then addressing her father, "Isn't that the Eiger," she asked—"the same we rode under yesterday?"

"To be sure it is," he answered.

She turned again to me.

" You see it is all a sham ! Last night it pretended to be on the very edge of the road and hanging over our heads at an awful height. Now it has gone a long way back, is not so very high, and certainly does not hang over. I ought not to have been satisfied with that precipice. It took me in."

I did not reply at once. Clara's words appeared to me quite irreverent, and I recoiled from the very thought that there could be any sham in nature ; but what to answer her I did not know. I almost began to dislike her ; for it is often incapacity for defending the faith they love which turns men into persecutors.

Seeing me foiled, Charley advanced with the doubtful aid of a sophism to help me.

" Which is the sham, Miss Clara ? " he asked.

" That Eiger mountain there."

" Ah ! so I thought."

" Then you are of my opinion, Mr. Osborne ? "

" You mean the mountain is shamming, don't you—looking far off when really it is near ? "

" Not at all. When it looked last night as if it hung right over our heads, it was shamming. See it now—far away there ! "

" But which then is the sham, and which is the true ? It *looked* near yesterday and now it *looks* far away. Which is which ? "

" It must have been a sham yesterday ; for although it looked near, it was very dull and dim, and you could only see the sharp outline of it."

" Just so I argue on the other side : The mountain must be shamming now, for although it looks so far off, it yet shows a most contradictory clearness—not only of outline but of surface."

" Aha ! " thought I, " Miss Clara has found her match. They both know he is talking nonsense, yet she can't answer him. What she was saying was nonsense too, but I can't answer it either—not yet."

I felt proud of both of them, but of Charley in especial, for I had had no idea he could be so quick.

" What ever put such an answer in your head, Charley ? " I exclaimed.

" Oh ! it's not quite original," he returned. " I believe it was suggested by two or three lines I read in a review just before we left home. They took a hold of me rather."

He repeated half of the now well-known little poem of Shelley, headed *Passage of the Apennines*. He had forgotten the name of the writer, and it was many years before I fell in with them myself.

" The Apennine in the light of day
Is a mighty mountain dim and gray,
Which between the earth and sky doth lay ;
But when night comes, a chaos dread
On the dim starlight then is spread,
And the Apennine walks abroad with the storm."

In the middle of it I saw Clara begin to titter, but she did not interrupt him. When he had finished, she said with a grave face, too grave for seriousness :

" Will you repeat the third line—I think it was, Mr. Osborne ? "

He did so.

" What kind of eggs did the Apennine lay, Mr. Osborne ? " she asked, still perfectly serious.

Charley was abashed to find she could take advantage of probably a provincialism to turn into ridicule such fine verses. Before he could recover himself, she had planted another blow or two.

" And where is its nest ? Between the earth and the sky is vague. But then to be sure it must want a good deal of room. And after all, a mountain is a strange fowl, and who knows where it might lay ? Between earth and sky is quite definite enough ? Besides, the bird-nesting boys might be dangerous if they knew where it was. It would be such a find for them ! "

My champion was defeated. Without attempting a word in reply, he hung back and dropped behind. Mr. Coningham must have heard the whole, but he offered no remark. I saw that Charley's sensitive nature was hurt, and my heart was sore for him.

" That's too bad of you, Clara," I said.

" What's too bad of me, Wilfrid ? " she returned.

I hesitated a moment, then answered—

" To make game of such verses. Any one with half a soul must see they were fine."

" Very wrong of you, indeed, my dear," said Mr. Coningham from behind, in a voice that sounded as if he were smothering a laugh ; but when I looked round, his face was grave.

" Then I suppose that half soul I haven't got," returned Clara.

" Oh ! I didn't mean that," I said, lamely enough. " But there's no logic in that kind of thing you know."

" You see, papa," said Clara, " what you are accountable for. Why didn't you make them teach me logic ? "

Her father smiled a pleased smile. His daughter's naïveté would in his eyes make up for any lack of logic.

" Mr. Osborne," continued Clara, turning back, " I beg your pardon. I am a woman, and you men don't allow us to learn logic. But at the same time you must confess you were making a bad use of yours. You know it was all nonsense you were trying to pass off on me for wisdom."

He was by her side the instant she spoke to him. A smile grew upon his face : I could see it growing, just as you see the sun growing behind a cloud. In a moment it broke out in radiance.

" I confess," he said. " I thought you were too hard on Wilfrid ; and he hadn't anything at hand to say for himself."

"And you were too hard upon me, weren't you? Two to one is not fair play—is it now?"

"No; certainly not."

"And that justified a little false play on my part?"

"No, it did *not*," said Charley, almost fiercely. "Nothing justifies false play."

"Not even yours, Mr. Osborne?" replied Clara, with a stately coldness quite marvellous in one so young; and leaving him, she came again to my side. I peeped at Mr. Coningham, curious to see how he regarded all this wrangling with his daughter. He appeared at once amused and satisfied. Clara's face was in a glow, clearly of anger at the discourteous manner in which Charley had spoken.

"You mustn't be angry with Charley, Clara," I said.

"He is very rude," she replied indignantly.

"What he said was rude, I allow, but Charley himself is anything but rude. I haven't looked at him, but I am certain he is miserable about it already."

"So he ought to be. To speak like that to a lady, when her very friendliness put her off her guard! I never was treated so in all my life."

She spoke so loud that she must have meant Charley to hear her. But when I looked back, I saw that he had fallen a long way behind, and was coming on very slowly, with dejected look and his eyes on the ground. Mr. Coningham did not interfere by word or sign.

When we reached the inn he ordered some refreshment, and behaved to us both as if we were grown men. Just a touch of familiarity was the sole indication that we were not grown men. Boys are especially grateful for respect from their superiors, for it helps them to respect themselves; but Charley sat silent and gloomy. As he would not ride back, and Mr. Coningham preferred walking too, I got into the saddle and rode by Clara's side.

As we approached the house, Charley crept up to the other side of Clara's horse, and laid his hand on his mane. When he spoke, Clara started, for she was looking the other way and had not observed his approach.

"Miss Clara," he said, "I am very sorry I was so rude. Will you forgive me?"

Instead of being hard to reconcile, as I had feared from her burst of indignation, she leaned forward and laid her hand on his. He looked up in her face, his own suffused with a colour I had never seen in it before. His great blue eyes lightened with thankfulness, and began to fill with tears. How she looked, I could not see. She withdrew her hand, and Charley dropped behind again. In a little while he came up to my side, and began talking. He soon got quite merry, but Clara in her turn was silent.

I doubt if anything would be worth telling but for what comes

after. History itself would be worthless but for what it cannot tell, namely its own future. Upon this ground my reader must excuse the apparent triviality of the things I am now relating.

When we were alone in our room that night—for ever since Charley's illness we two had had a room to ourselves—Charley said,

"I behaved like a brute this morning, Wilfrid."

"No, Charley; you were only a little rude from being over eager. If she had been seriously advocating dishonesty, you would have been quite right to take it up so; and you thought she was."

"Yes; but it was very silly of me. I dare say it was because I had been so dishonest myself just before. How dreadful it is that I am always taking my own side, even when I do what I am ashamed of in another. I suppose I think I have got my horse by the head, and the other has not."

"I don't know. That may be it," I answered. "I'm afraid I can't think about it to-night, for I don't feel well. What if it should be your turn to nurse me now, Charley?"

He turned quite pale, his eyes opened wide, and he looked at me anxiously.

Before morning I was aching all over: I had rheumatic fever.

SUBURBAN HOUSES.

WHEN Juvenal congratulated Umbritius, the poet, on his intended retirement from Rome to Cumæ, he told his friend that he was about to "give one more citizen to the Sibyl" by fixing his abode in a place where he could sleep peaceably in bed without the apprehension of falling houses or nightly fires.

If the great satirist had lived in our days, he could hardly have said as much in favour of many of the suburbs to which the citizen of London is constrained to transfer his household gods, whenever he may be desirous of breathing country air after his daily business is done.

In these times, so great is the migration that the demand for houses has led to the creation of suburbs in every direction round London, in which mercenary landlords and speculative builders have "run up" thousands of houses for the purpose of attracting, with the aid of "compo" and paint, the eye of the unwary Londoner, and of inducing him to exchange the substantial mansions of Finsbury and Bloomsbury for the delights of country life, as they are to be found within twenty miles of his place of business.

The British paterfamilias, loud as he is in his complaints when he believes that he is the only victim, is a patient and long-suffering animal when he finds that his neighbours are groaning under the same evils as himself; and hence it is that what we hear on all sides in the shape of a suppressed growl, never appears before the public eye in such a form as to be a warning to others. We believe, therefore, that we shall discharge the duties of citizenship by describing the experiences of a late worthy friend and father of a family in the matter of suburban houses.

Mr. Billiter Broadstreet was a colonial merchant whose name stood high in Mincing Lane. He had a wife and four children. Soon after he married he settled in the classic regions of Bloomsbury, where he occupied a house which dated from the reign of the second George, and was so substantially built that it will probably survive whole squares and terraces in the modern districts of fashionable London. The floors of all the rooms, the window-frames, and the doors were of solid oak; the beams were so thick that the modern gasfitters, whose existence was not even imagined when it was built, declared that their tools were ruined in the process of boring through them; while the walls were of such solid materials that no rain, even if continuous for

weeks together, could possibly penetrate them. In this old mansion Mr. Broadstreet would have been content to pass his life with an occasional run to the seaside during the autumn, by way of holiday; but his wife, following the example of some of her female neighbours, had made up her mind that the air of Bloomsbury was prejudicial to the complexions of her daughters, and that the only way of preserving their health was to live out of town, at such a distance as would enable their father to travel to and from his place of business with a season ticket. Mr. Broadstreet at first demurred to this proposal, on the ground that it would involve an inconvenient amount of fatigue on his part; but the subject was renewed so frequently, and at times and seasons when it was so especially irksome, that at length he surrendered at discretion for the sake of peace, and gave his wife a *carte blanche* to find a house suited to her inclinations and tastes. It is fair to add that this surrender was greatly facilitated by the pictures of horticultural enjoyment which the lady lost no opportunity of presenting to her husband's imagination—in which she expatiated on the delight of growing his own cabbages, of supplying his table with fruit of his own raising, and of adorning his button-hole every morning with a rose picked from his own borders. "You know, my dear," she said, "that digging in a garden adds ten years to a man's life. You could do the digging in the kitchen-garden when you come home from business. Jemima, Sarah, and myself could attend to the flower-beds. We should then be independent of greengrocers and fruiterers, with their stale stock and high charges; and should be able to give a dinner party *à la Russe*, with fruits and flowers of the best kinds fresh gathered by our own hands." Mr. Broadstreet, in reply, referred to the experience of their cousin, Mr. Average, of Clapton, a member of Lloyd's, who had assured him that every cabbage he had grown had cost him five shillings, and that every jobbing gardener he had employed had entered his place with empty pockets and had left it with full ones. Mrs. Broadstreet dismissed this objection with the remark that she had never known a "Lloyd's man" who was not a grumbler; and that as to the gardeners, she would take care that none of them ever got the better of her. She determined, however, to anticipate all further objections by losing no time in acting upon the permission she had gained; and the result was that in the course of a dozen years Mr. Broadstreet had undergone so many removals that he was able to boast that he had more than twice realised the proverb that "two removals are as bad as a fire."

His first house was a semi-detached villa, situated in a southern suburb, in a fine open situation, with a glorious sweep of downs in front of it—just such a place as his predecessor, who was an artist, might have been expected to choose on artistic principles. He took it on a three-years' agreement, and was so satisfied with the position and accommodation that he proceeded at once to furnish every part

of it with taste and elegance, and to lay out the garden in the most approved style of landscape gardening; filling it with fruit-trees of the best quality, and with costly evergreens and deciduous trees of the choicest sorts. He had scarcely completed this expenditure when the first effects of an exposed situation on an open down began to show themselves. A storm of wind and rain from the south-west swept over the house with such force that the wind whistled through the ill-fitting windows until one might have supposed that a man was whistling outside; while the rain, overflowing the narrow strip of lead which formed the gutter of the roof between the parapet and the slates, forced its way through the ceilings of the bedrooms, and kept the household in a state of excitement, both by night and by day, by obliging them to place basins and tubs on various parts of the floors to catch the water. While this was the state of things indoors, the beautiful flower-beds—which, like a true Londoner, Mr. Broadstreet had formed and planted in the garden—had to be dug up and destroyed in order to get at the drains, which were made of pipes so small that they were continually choked up with the deposit of greasy matter from the scullery, which constitutes so frequent a source of stoppage in drain-pipes of small calibre. During the whole tenancy not a month passed without workmen of some kind being upon the premises; and it was a relief rather than otherwise, not only to Mr. Broadstreet but to his wife also, when the house, being heavily mortgaged, was sold over his head by the mortgagee, and the purchaser requested him to vacate, in order that he might occupy it himself.

His next house was what the auctioneers call a “bijou residence,”—a detached house in one of the most picturesque parts of Surrey; and, though small and inferior in accommodation, not less agreeably situated than the last. The drains, however, were so badly constructed that from time to time they poisoned the place with their exhalations; and it was necessary to dig up the garden in order to trap them. On the other hand, the house was fortunate in its water supply, which, throughout all this district, was derived exclusively from rain-tanks and deep wells. In the present case the well was sunk in the gravel, and the water consequently was clear and excellent. This was a great and exceptional advantage; for a neighbour, who had been incautious enough to buy his house before ascertaining that it had been “built to sell,” discovered, when too late, that the well in his garden penetrated a stratum of fullers’-earth; so that the first cup of tea he ever made in his new residence was of the colour and taste of ink. Mr. Broadstreet had taken his house from the previous lessee for the last four years of a lease, and believing, in the true spirit of a Londoner, that the four years would last for ever, he had stocked the garden with the best fruit-trees to be found in the nurseries of Kent and Sussex. But, just as the trees were beginning to be ornamental and productive, the lease expired; and the landlord,

who was a third-rate tradesman in the southern outskirts of London, taking advantage of the manifest improvement of his property, gave notice that he must have an increase of rent to the extent of £10 per annum. This increase appeared to Mr. Broadstreet to be so unjust that he declined to pay it; but, inasmuch as he had made the garden what it was, he expressed his wish to remove a few of the trees which he had planted, and for which his wife or himself had a particular regard. The landlord, in reply, peremptorily refused to allow the removal of a single tree, stating that if a tenant were foolish enough to fill another man's ground with trees and shrubs, he ought to know that he was planting them not for himself, but for his landlord. Mr. Broadstreet consulted his lawyer upon this point, and was consoled with the information that the landlord was so far right that he had the power of prohibiting the removal of the trees, but that the tenant, on the other hand, had the right of cutting down every tree and shrub on the premises, whether planted by himself or by the landlord—the law assuming that the tenant might require the trees for firewood—provided always that, in carrying out this privilege, the tenant avoided any interference with the roots, which the law required him to leave in the ground. Mr. Broadstreet was at first indignant enough to feel disposed to avail himself of the privilege thus given to him by cutting all his trees down to the ground; but, on reflection, he came to the conclusion that it would be an outrage upon nature to destroy objects of so much beauty for the sake of spiting an obstinate and ignorant landlord. He, therefore, determined to abandon his choice fruit-trees, his rare conifers, and his beautiful specimens of deciduous trees and shrubs; and quitted the place with the firm resolution that he would never again take a house belonging to a London tradesman of the third class.

He next migrated to one of the largest and most fashionable of metropolitan suburbs. He there took a house constructed on the most approved type of mediævalism, and presenting, at first sight, a striking combination of red, black, and yellow bricks. But, alas! this gay exterior served only to distract attention from the back and sides of the house, which had been built of bricks so spongy that the rain found its way downwards through the walls at every shower, while the bricks of the basement sucked up the moisture from the clay soil; so that the walls were kept perpetually damp by two streams of moisture, the one ascending and the other descending. This house belonged to a man of great wealth, who met every complaint by producing a bundle of papers and receipts to show that he had been victimised by the builders whom he had employed to cover his estate with houses of a superior class. He was, however, too great a personage to condescend to visit his houses and judge for himself how much his tenants suffered; and the only occasion on which he was known to enter them was when he ran down *incognito*.

to reconnoitre the property, and, to his mortal horror, was recognised by the ladies of the two families who occupied his principal houses, and were clever enough to cut off his retreat, and make him personally examine the discomforts and defects to which they had hitherto failed to call his attention by any amount of correspondence. In the house of Mr. Billiter Broadstreet the drains gave the first warning that there was something wrong. The water would not run away, and the house was pestiferous. As he had fortunately insisted that the landlord should keep the roof and drains in repair during his three years' tenancy, the medieval architect was sent down to examine the drains. During a whole morning workmen were employed, under his direction, in digging up the pipes; while architect, workmen, and household were all poisoned with the stench, without discovering the cause of the stoppage. At length, on reaching nearly the end of the garden, it was found that the pipes had not been connected with the sewers in the adjoining road, but terminated in the clay under the garden! The next warning would have been considered quite as serious by every one who believes that tenants have a right to expect that landlords should supply them with the means of cooking their food. The kitchen was furnished with what appeared to be a handsome range, between six and seven feet in length, with a spacious oven on one side, and a large boiler on the other. From the first moment when a fire was lighted it became evident that not more than a quart of hot water could be drawn at a time from the tap of the boiler, after which the water which passed was quite cold. This was looked upon as a temporary inconvenience, caused probably by some obstruction or stiffness in the valves of the cistern, which would disappear with use. A few days afterwards, when it was necessary to have a baked dinner, a pie which was put into the oven at four p.m. came out at seven o'clock as white and as uncooked as when it was put in—three hours' good firing having failed to make it even luke-warm. As Christmas was approaching, the impossibility of cooking a dinner fit for the friends who were invited became so apparent, that Mr. Broadstreet asked the landlord to allow a fire to be lit in the kitchen of one of his unoccupied houses, in order to cook the Christmas dinner. To have complied with this request would have been too open an acknowledgment of the defects of the house, and, consequently, two skilled workmen were sent down from London to make the stove act. After numerous and ineffectual experiments, they decided that the stove was so radically bad that there was no alternative but to replace it by one of proper construction. The brickwork was therefore pulled down and the stove dislodged, when, to the astonishment of the workmen themselves, it was discovered that the oven was a mere iron cupboard, without a flue by which one particle of flame or heat could reach it; and that the handsome-looking boiler was no boiler at all, but a false front, through which a water-pipe, traversing the back of the grate, was carried from the

cistern to the tap, so that the fire might heat the water as it passed. It is needless to say that the stove was pronounced by these skilled workmen to be a mere sham, and to be fit only to be sold as old iron. Until it was replaced by a new one, it was necessary to have a fire in the scullery for the purpose of cooking the daily meals; but the first time it was lit, the occupiers of the adjoining house sent in to say that they were smothered with smoke. On investigation it appeared that the chimneys of the two basements had been so constructed that there was no wall of separation between them, and that they opened into each other—a state of things which Juvenal would have considered a sufficient explanation of the “nightly fires,” whose frequency at Rome in his time he classed with that of “falling houses.” But still greater evils were in progress. While these defects were brought to light in the lower part of the house, the rain had so thoroughly saturated the upper walls, that the paper of the best bed-room, besides the ordinary discolouration of damp, presented on its surface a plenteous crop of fungi, and rendered it necessary to remove all articles of furniture, curtains, &c., from contact with the walls. The wet next penetrated the ceiling, and at length brought down a mass sufficient to have smashed the toilet-table, if one of the ladies of the family had not been in the act of moving the table out of possible danger at the moment of its fall. The materials of which this ceiling was composed appeared to be so suspicious that, on being examined by a well-known architect, it was found to contain not a particle of hair, and to be held together simply by a few fragments of jute. It was also found that the ceilings of the other rooms were composed of the same materials, and that their fall was only a question of time. The wet now spread so rapidly over the remaining portion of the ceiling of the best bed-room, that the drip of the rain fell upon the bed, and rendered it necessary to move it first to one side of the room and then to another, and afterwards into each corner in succession. At length the entire apartment became so saturated with moisture, that Mrs. Broadstreet’s favourite Pomeranian dog, which always slept in a basket against the wall opposite her bed, was attacked in his head and neck with acute rheumatism of so severe a character that he never completely recovered from its effects, and ever afterwards carried his head awry. After this warning that the room was dangerous to sleep in, the best bed was dismantled altogether, and as every other room in the house was occupied, with the exception of an attic, which was too wet for anything living to sleep in, the drawing-room had to be turned into a bed-room; so that, at that time, the tenant might literally be said to have been paying for rooms which it was impossible to occupy. But while, lying in his bed in its novel position in the drawing-room, he could look around him and see on every side a choice collection of works of art and prints after the old masters, it so happened that these very works of art and beauty were so threatened by the damp, that it was neces-

sary, for their safety, to put pieces of wood between the frames and the walls, in order to keep the prints as far as possible from the spongy brickwork, down which the water streamed in wet weather in a continuous current from the cornice to the floor; and whenever a thaw took place, there was no alternative but to take them down altogether. Another discovery, made at the same period, by another professional man of eminence, was that the house itself was not built with mortar, but with road-scrapings. The prospect of being smothered in his bed by falling ceilings was by no means pleasant; but Mr. Broadstreet had no occasion to wait for such a contingency. The increasing damp of the walls had so completely undermined the health of two members of the family, that three medical men who had come down from London for the purpose of consultation on the subject, enjoined immediate removal, on the ground that the house was unfit for habitation. Mr. Broadstreet accordingly resolved to quit the premises immediately, although his agreement was only half expired. The great man who owned the property stormed, and threatened proceedings in Chancery, and actions at Common Law; but finding that Mr. Broadstreet was unmoved by his threats, he ultimately offered to cancel the agreement, as Mr. Broadstreet had at first proposed, on the latter paying a quarter's rent. While the vans were in the act of removing the furniture, the landlord had a scaffolding erected round the house, and resorted to "compo," the last resource of dishonest builders, to whose hearts it appears to be as dear as paint is to those of faded beauties in the world of fashion. The "compo," as he expected, covered, like charity, a multitude of sins, and in the course of a few weeks the mediæval house was occupied by another victim.

Made cautious by these experiences, Mr. Broadstreet endeavoured to find a house in another and more popular suburb, in which they were as spacious as they were showy, and if there were any defects in their construction they were effectually concealed by stucco and paint. The number of vacant houses, however, appeared suspicious, and, on inquiry, it was found that whole rows of villas had been built of ship timber, or of old materials derived from the warehouses which had been demolished after the great fire at London Bridge—a fact which promised an extensive population of insects which Mr. Broadstreet had not the courage to encounter.

He next started in the opposite direction, to visit a new house which a wealthy landlord had undertaken to have ready for occupation by a certain day, assuring our friend that it was built in such a manner that he would have no reason to complain of faulty brick-work as he had had before. An arriving at this land of promise, he found that, though the house had been ostensibly finished for some weeks, a scaffolding had been re-erected around it, and that a party of masons were picking out the mortar from the brickwork and filling the interstices with cement, the mortar having proved too rotten to

keep out the rain. He found also, fortunately for his future comfort, that one of the party-walls had not been plastered, so that he was able to ascertain that the bricks were of the commonest description, and that the space between the outer and the inner row had been filled up with old mortar, with the broken materials of houses which had been pulled down, with flints and other rubbish, showing that even to a rich landlord the temptation of obtaining a larger percentage for his outlay, and of erecting houses that will "pay," is more than sufficient to counterbalance the odium of covering his land with worthless houses, and driving respectable tenants from them in disgust. It is needless to say that Mr. Broadstreet declined this house, and congratulated himself on having had a lucky escape.

His next expedition was to a district situated on one of the most popular railways out of London, and possessing every recommendation which soil, elevation, and climate could possibly ensure. He there found that the evil genius which had ruined so many other suburbs had surpassed itself in the mischief it had wrought. In all directions, occupying healthy and beautiful positions, he saw attractive houses, which were literally sodden from roof to basement, with water from the gutters of the roof, or from the brickwork itself; and having by diligent inquiries discovered that previous tenants had paid a heavy penalty for residing in them, in the destruction of their furniture by damp, Mr. Broadstreet at once renounced all idea of settling in that favourite suburb.

At length he found, on the picturesque border-line which separates Surrey from Kent, a house which promised everything which could be desired in the way of position and internal accommodation. But, alas! the Misses Broadstreet, for whom the country air should have made "beauty's ensign," as Shakespeare describes it, "crimson on their lips and on their cheeks," became paler and paler every day, until at length they, as well as their mother, were unable to leave their beds. The doctor, on being summoned, pronounced the case to be one of fever produced by blood-poisoning. Being a scientific man, he resolved to trace the disease to its cause. In the first place he found that all the water used in cooking was collected in a cistern into which the air-pipe of the closet discharged its superfluous water; an arrangement which Mr. Simon, the medical officer of the Board of Health, long since condemned as a source of disease and dirt. He also ascertained, by a microscopic examination, that this water was literally alive with animaleculæ; and a further investigation showed that the bottom of the cistern below the tap, about two inches in depth, was a mass of black decomposing matter, the sediment of years. Another discovery of equally evil omen was the fact that the builder of the house, though a wealthy man and a local preacher in the district, in order to save a few shillings in laying the drains, had put them together without cement or stuffing of any kind, so that every shower of rain caused so great an irruption of sand through

the joints of the pipes that the drains speedily silted up, and filled the house with a deadly malaria which soon laid the entire household on their backs with an attack of dysentery. As soon as they had sufficiently recovered from this attack Mr. Broadstreet returned to town, declaring that he had known no real enjoyment since he had left his comfortable house in London, and that for the remainder of his life he would have no more to do with suburban builders.

And now, having sketched the experiences of our late friend, we will proceed to point the moral which may be drawn from them. In the first place, we would say, take no house without having it first examined by a surveyor, with special instructions to inspect the state of the roof, the brickwork of the walls, and the condition of the drains. Secondly, take no house for a longer term than three years; or, better still, take it as a yearly tenant, if it be possible to make such an arrangement, with power to continue it for a term, at the end of the first or second year, if it should be found sound and healthy. Sign no agreement until everything required has been satisfactorily performed, bearing in mind that after a tenant is in occupation the landlord will do nothing which he can avoid. With regard to the garden, if the house be newly built, the landlord will frequently leave it like a piece of a ploughed field, without walks, fruit trees, ornamental trees, or shrubs of any kind, under the pretence of allowing the tenant to exercise his own taste in the matter. Insist, therefore, before entering on occupation, on the garden being properly laid out, planted, fenced, and gravelled by the landlord; or you will find, when too late, that you have been expending on another man's property an amount of money which, if added to the rent you pay, would have obtained for you a house and grounds of far higher pretensions, and with much greater capabilities of enjoyment. Finally, and above all, if the house has been already occupied, search out the previous tenant, and ascertain from him what are its merits and demerits, its recommendations and defects. A few minutes' conversation with an occupier who has had personal experience of the house under all these phases, would in many cases save both money and life, and would certainly prevent the wear and tear of body and of mind which daily life in a badly built house is certain to produce. Moreover, the information thus gained, if the house be unfit for occupation, would prevent you from adding another victim to the long list of sufferers from dishonest builders; and, on the other hand, if the house be capable of improvement, it would enable you to fight the enemy with his own weapons, by requiring him to make good the defects at his own cost, and by refusing to enter the house until he has done so. The result of such a course of action, if tenants could be induced to adopt it for their mutual protection, would soon bring landlords and builders to their senses, and effect such a substantial reform in the construction of "suburban houses" as would spare the next generation from the troubles to which the present has been exposed.

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A VIRTUOSO.

"Art is the helpmate of Humanity."

Popular Error.

Be seated, pray. "A grave appeal?"
The sufferers by the war, of course;
Ah, what a sight for us who feel,—
This monstrous *mélodrame* of Force!
We, sir, we connoisseurs, should know
On whom its heaviest burden falls;
Collections shattered at a blow,
Museums turned to hospitals!

"And worse," you say; "the wide distress!"
Alas, 'tis true distress exists,
Though, let me add, our worthy Press
Have no mean skill as colourists;—
Speaking of colour, next your seat
There hangs a sketch from Vernet's hand;
Some Moscow fancy, incomplete,
Yet not indifferently planned;

Note specially the gray old Guard,
Who tears his tattered coat to wrap
A closer bandage round the scarred
And frozen comrade in his lap;—
But, as regards the present war,—
Now don't you think our pride of pence
Goes—may I say it?—somewhat far
For objects of benevolence?

You hesitate. For my part, I—
Though ranking Paris next to Rome,
Æsthetically—still reply
That "Charity begins at Home."
The words remind me. Did you catch
My so-named "Hunt?" The girl's a gem;
And look how those lean rascals watch
The pile of scraps she brings to them!

"But your appeal's for home," you say,
 "For home, and English poor!" Indeed!
 I thought Philanthropy to-day
 Was blind to mere domestic need—
 However sore—Yet though one grants
 That home should have the foremost claims,
 At least these Continental wants
 Assume intelligible names;

While here with us—Ah! who could hope
 To verify the varied pleas,
 Or from his private means to cope
 With all our shrill necessities!
 Impossible! One might as well
 Attempt comparison of creeds;
 Or fill that huge Malayan shell
 With these half-dozen Indian beads.

Moreover, add that every one
 So well exalts his pet distress,
 'Tis—Give to all, or give to none,
 If you'd avoid invidiousness.
 Your ease, I feel, is sad as A's,
 The same applies to B's and C's;
 By my selection I should raise
 An alphabet of rivalries;

And life is short,—I see you look
 At yonder dish, a priceless bit;
 You'll find it drawn in Brongniart's book,
 They say that Raphael painted it;—
 And life is short, you understand;
 So, if I only hold you out
 An open though an empty hand,
 Why you'll forgive me, I've no doubt.

Nay, do not rise. You seem amused;
 And yet one must have principle!
 'Twas on these grounds I just refused
 Some gushing Lady Bountiful,—
 Believe me, on these very grounds.
 Good-bye, then. Ah, a rarity!
 That cost me quite three hundred pounds,—
 The Dürer figure,—"Charity."

AUSTIN DOBSON.

HANNAH.

A Novel.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "JOHN HALIFAX, GENTLEMAN."

CHAPTER III.

THIS is no sensational or exceptional history, but one that might happen—does happen—continually. The persons therein described are just ordinary people, neither ideally good nor extraordinarily bad. Not so weak as to be the mere sport of circumstances, yet human enough to be influenced thereby, as we all are. In short, neither heroes nor heroines, but men and women—the men and women of whom society is mainly composed, and for which it has to legislate.

Hannah Thelluson was no heroine, Bernard Rivers no hero; and they had not lived many days under the same roof before they made that mutual discovery—more especially as they had plenty of spare time in which to make it; for, the fine autumn melting in continuous rain, no visitors came near the House on the Hill. Not even from the Moat-House. Miss Thelluson had called there, as she promised; but the family were out driving. Next day a footman brought her the cards of Lady and the Misses Rivers, with an apology for not calling, on account of the rain.

"They will ask you to dinner next; my people are very particular on points of etiquette," observed Mr. Rivers, evidently annoyed.

But Hannah was not annoyed at all. Not even when the invitation never came, and the rain cleared up; yet somehow or other she had been nearly three weeks at Easterham without having once met her brother-in-law's family.

Of Mr. Rivers himself she had enough and to spare. It is a severe trial for any two people to be thrown on one another's exclusive society—at meal times and all other times that politeness requires—striving in a hopeless manner to make conversation, eager to find out and seize upon the smallest point of mutual interest which will break the dull monotony of the time. What they were to her brother-in-law Hannah could not tell, but to her the first four days seemed like fourteen.

It was not from the dulness, which she would have put up with, being a very patient woman; but Mr. Rivers sometimes vexed her exceedingly. His desultory, lazy way of hanging about the house; his variableness; his irritability; and, above all, his indifference and carelessness about everybody and everything, were—to a woman

who all her life had found plenty to do, and if she could not find work, made it—utterly incomprehensible.

"But I suppose it is because I am a woman, and have never been used to live with any man—except my father, and he was not a man, he was an angel!"

So she argued with herself, and "did her duty," as she considered it, to the full; placing herself at Mr. Rivers's beck and call every hour in the day, following him about obediently, as he evidently liked to be followed, for his craving after sympathy and his horror of solitude were almost painful to witness; in short, trying to devote herself to him as a nurse does to a sickly, naughty child—naughty because sickly. But she did not enjoy this task. His unhappy, restless face made her heart ache; his aimless, useless life afflicted her conscience. A man, a father, a clergyman, surely he was made for better things. If heaven had taken away his delights, his duties still were left him. He ought to rouse himself.

And one day, driven almost to desperation by the way in which he had done nothing hour after hour but moon about and "bother" her, as an idle melancholy man does bother a busy woman—and Hannah had not been twenty-four hours in that chaotic, headless house before her head and hands were quite full of business—she ventured to hint this.

"Work!" he answered. "I have no work; nothing that I care to do. She always did everything with me; we went about the parish together; she used to call herself my curate in petticoats; and the curate was much more useful than the vicar I believe. Oh, Hannah! you knew what she was, but you never knew what she was to me!"

A tender idealization, perhaps; but the sister felt it deeply. Every memory of poor Rosa was most sacred to her heart too.

"But," she reasoned, "is there nothing you could do, if only for Rosa's sake? She could not bear to see the parish neglected, as you say it is. She would like you to look after the poor and the sick, and carry them comfort."

"I carry comfort!"

"Those can, who have known sorrow."

The widower looked at her, uncomprehendingly, with his wild, wistful, miserable eyes—this woman so quiet, so gentle, yet somewhat sad too.

"You have known sorrow?"

"I have."

"Can you teach me how to bear mine?"

What she answered was very little; but it was to the purpose, something like what the Lord said to the man sick of palsy—what He says to every man who is sinking under the paralysis of grief, "Rise up and walk!" She told him, in plain words, that instead of sitting at home to mourn, he ought to go out and work.

"I would, only I have no heart to go alone. There is an endless number of parish visits due—where she always went with me. If—"

He hesitated. Hannah hesitated too. It seemed usurping so pointedly the place of the dead; and yet—that dreary, helpless, appealing look of the lonely man!

"If you like—that is, if you do not dislike my coming, and I can be of any use to you——"

"Would you go with me? That would be so very kind. Only this muddy, damp day——"

"Oh, I never mind mud or rain!"

"Nor trouble, nor fatigue, nor anything else unpleasant, so long as you can do a kindness. She always said so, and now I have found it out for myself."

Hannah smiled. Until now she had no idea whether her brother-in-law liked her or not, and she was not above the pleasantness of being liked. "Suppose, then, I go and put on my bonnet at once?" And as she did so she caught a sight of her own face in the glass smiling. "If he likes me I may get some influence over him, so as to make my duty easier. And I will try to see his faults less plain, and his good points plainer, as people should who are obliged to live together. How shall I be able to teach my little girlie to love her father if I do not love him myself a little? I may in time!"

And she went down-stairs with a more cheerful heart.

After that, nearly every day, she and "the parson" went out together, and he made her acquainted with all the poor people in the village;—only the poor. The few big houses there were, taking their cue from the biggest of all—the Moat-House—or from some other mysterious reason, into which Miss Thelluson did not care to penetrate, but which apparently annoyed Mr. Rivers a good deal—of these she saw nothing. They did not call.

Little she cared! Every minute of her day was occupied. Household affairs, parish work, the endless help that her brother-in-law soon came to expect from her; often Hannah smiled to herself at finding that before her new life had lasted twenty days, she was growing a busier woman than ever—too busy to heed outside things. Besides, in addition to all this, there had come over her a change which made her feel as if outside things never could affect her any more. She had fallen in love.

Smile not, readers, masculine readers especially, who think that we women can fall in love with nothing but your noble selves. The object of Hannah's passion was only—a baby!

People say that babies are all alike; but it is to those who do not discriminate them or love them, who take no interest in that wonderful and most pathetic sight—the growth of a human soul. Ay, and a child's soul begins to grow almost as soon as it is born.

Within three months—mothers know—you can almost see it growing. At least in most children.

Now, at nine months old, little Rosie Rivers was an actual individual character, with an individual soul. It had shone out of her eyes that very first morning when she opened and fixed them on her aunt, who sat beside her, watching for her waking. And when Hannah took the little white bundle in her arms, Rosie first drew herself back, and with grave, sad, appealing eyes, intently contemplated the stranger. “Who are you? What do you want with me? Are you going to be kind to me?” said the mute little face, as plain as any words. Then, as if satisfied with her investigation, she slowly dropped her head on her aunt’s shoulder, and Hannah pressed her passionately to her breast.

Thus they fell in love—the woman and the child—and the love grew day by day in a miraculous—no! in not any miraculous way. Children have a heavenly instinct in finding good people and people that love them, in whom they may safely trust. Ere two days were over Rosie would leave anybody to go to her aunt’s arms. As for Hannah, she could not get enough of her felicity. Had she not longed for this, ay, ever since she had dressed up her big doll in her own half-worn baby clothes, and caressed it with all a mother’s devotedness, at eleven years old? To have a baby—a baby of her very own, as it were—for nurse had given warning at once—it was perfect content. Every minute that she could steal from Rosie’s father she gave to the child;—she would have liked to be in the nursery all day long. When wearied out with Mr. Rivers’s restlessness, saddened by his gloomy face, she would fly for refuge to that sunshiny room—her own room—which she had made as cosy and pretty as she could, and find it a heaven of peace; for the bright little face, the happy little voice, were something nearer heaven than anything her life had as yet ever known.

It might not have been the same with all children; but the poor motherless Rosie was a very original child. Small, quiet, gentle, pale, there was yet in the baby-mouth a firm little will of its own, and in the serious eyes a strange out-looking, as if seeing something grown-up people could not see—seeking, perhaps, the mother she was never to know. Very soon Hannah learnt to think that tiny face unlike all the faces she had ever beheld. Not that it was pretty—poor Rosie was wholly unworthy, physically, of her handsome father and beautiful mother—but it had such a world of changeful meanings in it; it was such a wonderful thing to study and marvel over. In its peaceful, heavenly dumbness it seemed to come to the lonely, shut-up woman like a face out of the unknown world.

Such a companion Rosie was too! Miss Thelluson was accustomed to big pupils, and fond as she was of children, they sometimes worried her; but this soft, silent creature, with its pretty ways, its

speechless yet intelligible wants, only soothed her, and that inexplicably. She would sit or lie for hours on the nursery floor with Rosie crowing over her, investigating her watch, her keys, her hair, her dress, with that endless pursuit of knowledge under difficulties peculiar to infants who are just catching hold of the key of mystery which unlocks to them the marvellous visible world.

And the world invisible—even that seemed to be very near about this little child. The words, “in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven,” were always coming into Hannah’s mind; and the awful punishment of those who sin against “one of these little ones,” seemed to be only natural and just.

“You seem very fond of that baby,” said Mr. Rivers, one day when she had tried to make it an attractive drawing-room guest for about a quarter of an hour.

“Fond of”—what an idle, unmeaning word! Why, Rosie was a treasure that one of God’s angels had dropped into her arms straight from the Father’s house, and bade her cherish it and make it into an immortal soul, fit for His kingdom on earth, which is one with His kingdom in heaven. This was how Hannah felt when she watched the child. But she said nothing. How could Mr. Rivers, or any man, understand? Who could put into any father’s face the mother-look of the Virgin Mary?

As she stood there, with Rosie leaning across her shoulder, and patting auntie’s cheek with that little dimpled hand, Mr. Rivers, who had travelled half over Europe, and knew every Madonna by heart, called her to look at herself, for she and the child were just the picture of a certain Holy Family he named.

The colour came painfully into Hannah’s cheek. She, too, like Mary, could have sung her Magnificat; all to herself—her quiet, lonely self. What had she done that heaven should send her this blessing—she, a solitary woman of thirty years old? As she carried away little Rosie—who was quite too much for papa, except in the character of a Rafaëlesque *bambino*, and for about the space of ten minutes—she clasped the child passionately to her heart. It had never beat so warmly, so hopefully, since her Arthur died.

This was on a Sunday morning, the first sunshiny Sunday since her arrival, and as Miss Thelluson and her brother-in-law walked together through the bright-looking village, all the neighbours turned out in their best clothes to go to church and criticise the stranger. Easterham was a sufficiently small place for everybody to know everybody; and Hannah was fully aware she was running the gauntlet of innumerable eyes,—“upper-class” eyes: among the poor she was already well known. But this was the first time she had taken her public place in the parish—the first time, for many a long year, that she had walked to church arm-in-arm (country fashion,

he offered his and she accepted it) with a man, and a man that belonged to her. It felt—not exactly uncomfortable, but—strange.

Her brother-in-law, however, seemed quite at ease, and every person who came up to speak to him he carefully introduced to "My sister—Miss Thelluson." Sometimes it was "sister-in-law," but always pointedly "sister."

"He is not in the least ashamed of me—no more than he was of his wife," thought she, with a certain comfort. For if she had been much given to mind outside things it might have struck her that this handsome young man, with his Norman ancestry, his easy fortune, and his position as heir presumptive to one of the first families in the county, was a strong contrast to a quiet, rather old-fashioned governess—even though she was his wife's sister. But if she had also been a duchess he could not have shown her more tender politeness, and Hannah was grateful.

It was only when he looked towards the wicket-gate which divided the church from the Moat-House, of which it seemed originally to have been a mere appurtenance, that his countenance fell.

"I see my people coming. We must stop and speak to them. It will be best, as you sit in the same pew, and as—as we may have to go to lunch. They generally expect me on Sundays."

"But not me—oh, I hope not. I want to be at home to give Rosie her dinner." And Hannah, with a nervousness for which she despised herself, shrank back from the fashionable elderly lady and her four fashionable daughters, who seemed to fill up the whole of the yew avenue, quite shutting out little old Sir Austin, who came tottering after on his gold-headed stick.

"Never mind Rosie, for once. If they ask you, do not refuse, pray," whispered Mr. Rivers. He seemed either excessively fond of, or painfully subservient to, his family—a family which appeared to Hannah very much like most other county families—well-looking, well-bred, well-educated, and exceedingly well-dressed. Among the odd fancies that flitted across her mind—she had had a keen sense of humour, and even a slight turn for satire, in her youth—was the comical suggestion—What would they be without their clothes? That is, how would they look or feel if dressed like workhouse-women, or labourers' wives—or, still worse, in the red chemise of Charlotte Corday or the white sheet of Jane Shore? They looked so very proper—those five ladies, sweeping one after the other down the church aisle, and kneeling, not a fold awry in their draperies, round their respectable square pew—that, to imagine them placed in tragical or anywise exceptional circumstances, where the trappings of worldly formality had dropped off them, and they had to feel and act like common creatures of flesh and blood, seemed a thing impossible.

Foolish thoughts these were, perhaps; but they were partly owing to her brother-in-law's sermon, which was exceedingly common-place. He had said himself, overnight, that he felt not the slightest interest

in his sermons, and only did them mechanically, not believing them at all. It looked like it ; and as Miss Thelluson listened—or rather tried hard not to, for listening irritated her so—she wished that instead of being in church she were sitting on the sunny lawn, beside that little white daisy with a pink hood, which, as she kissed it before leaving, had looked up to her with eyes in which were written the best sermons in the world—eyes that seemed as if only an hour ago they had seen the angels.

As Hannah thought of them, she forgot Lady Rivers, with her withered, but still red—ah ! far too red—cheeks, and the Misses Rivers, with their fashionable clothes. What were they to her ? Had she not her baby—her little Rose of June. The dainty, soft, round, innocent thing ! how sweet she must be looking now in her mid-day sleep at home !—It was the first time that even in thought Miss Thelluson had called her brother-in-law's house “home.” She did so now, for her baby was there.

Her baby, and no one else's; for no one seemed to take the smallest interest in it. After service, the procession of five silk gowns, with women inside them, sailed slowly back down the yew avenue, and through the garden to the beautiful old Moat-House : but nobody asked after baby. Neither grandmamma nor aunts seemed to remember there was such a creature in the world. Hannah hugged herself half indignantly, half exultingly, in the fact. Her baby was all her own.

The Rivers family were perfectly polite to her. The invitation to lunch was given, and—chiefly because of the anxiety she saw in her brother-in-law's eyes—accepted ; so they sat down all together in the grand old dining-room, with generations of defunct Riverses watching them from the walls. The conversation was quite general, and rather insipid ; indeed, Hannah could not help thinking how very dull was the company of grown-up people after that of her baby. Her baby ! whose dumb intelligence was such an infinite mystery, such an endless interest. She longed to be back at home with Rosie ; nevertheless she did her best, for Mr. Rivers's sake, to be pleasant, and when—he having a christening and a funeral, though there was no second service—he asked her to wait for him, that they might walk home together, she sat down again to endure another hour of the foolish heart-ache which mothers understand, when they are kept away for a good many hours from the helpless creature that depends on them so entirely.

The bright day had settled into autumnal rain, so the family party gathered round the fire—doing nothing, of course, as it was Sunday. Sir Austin openly fell asleep ; Lady Rivers took up a huge Bible and “meditated”—nodding a good deal at intervals ; the girls began, *sotto voce*, that desultory gossiping which is supposed to be so much more Sabbatical than books or work. They were all pretty girls—nay, rather pleasant girls, these four paternal aunts of little Rosie ; and her

maternal aunt tried hard to get acquainted with them, and find out what was really in them. But, of late years, Hannah's life had been so much spent with children, and so little with young ladies, that she found herself completely at sea, and watching these specimens of modern womanhood with the grave, perplexed criticism of an elder generation.

"Will my Rosie grow up thus?" she thought to herself. "Will she talk about 'jolly,' and 'green,' and 'the maternal parent,' and 'the governor?' Will there come into her little innocent head such very odd ideas about love and marriage?" (One of the girls was engaged, and the others evidently hoped to be, ere long). "Is she to grow up a little Miss Rivers, after the pattern of these?"

Not if auntie can help it, answered auntie's quiet, strong heart, as the awfulness of her self-imposed duty, extending far into future years, came upon her with double force. A boy would have belonged to his father, and been made naturally and wholly a Rivers, but a girl—this little unwelcome girl—was hers and Rosa's. Might not baby grow up to be the foundress of a new family, the mother of many sons? This childless old maid, whose race was done, built up no end of castles in the air for her niece Rosie. In which, I am afraid—and yet in time to come Miss Thelluson was not sorry, but glad of this—Rosie's father had not the slightest share.

She fell into such a dream about the child—even in the midst of the young ladies' chatter—that she quite started when Lady Rivers, suddenly waking up, and most anxious to appear as if she had never been sleeping, put a sudden question.

"By-the-bye, Miss Thelluson, I hear you have discharged Anne Savage, and taken a new nursery-maid?"

"Mrs. Savage gave me warning herself, but I was not sorry, as I prefer a younger woman," said Hannah quietly.

"That, pardon me, is a mistake. I always made a point that my head nurse should be over forty."

"But you had a nursery full of children; I have only Rosie."

"Oh, by-the-bye, how is Rosie?" cried one of the girls. But as she did not wait for an answer, Hannah never gave it.

"And who is your new nurse?" said grandmamma, in a rather severe grandmotherly tone.

"Grace Dixon, sister, I believe, to those Dixons of whom the village is so full. It was Mrs. John Dixon, the blacksmith's wife, who recommended her to me. She said you knew the family well."

"Miss Thelluson seems to have acquainted herself with Easterham people as if she had lived here all her days,—or meant to do so," said the eldest Miss Rivers, who was at times a little sharp of speech. She was nearly twenty-eight, and still Miss Rivers, which she did not like at all.

"No, I do not mean to live at Easterham all my days," returned Hannah, glad of an opportunity to remove any false impression the

family might have of her coming to take entire possession of her brother-in-law, and rule rampant over him all the rest of his life, as evidently they thought he might be ruled. "On the contrary, I earnestly hope my stay here will be short; that your brother may soon find a good wife, and need me no more."

"So you approve of second marriages?"

"Yes," said Hannah, swallowing down a slight pang. "Yes. In a case like this, most decidedly. I think the wisest thing Mr. Rivers could do would be to marry again, after due time. That is, if he married the right woman."

"What do you mean by 'the right woman'?" asked Lady Rivers.

"One who will make a good mother as well as a good wife. In his first choice a man has only to think of himself, in a second marriage he has usually to consider not only himself, but his children."

"I don't fancy Bernard will be in any haste to marry again. He was very, very fond of poor Rosa."

It was Adeline, the youngest, who said this; and Hannah's heart warmed to her—the first who had called her dead sister "Rosa," or, indeed, spoken of her at all. To Adeline she turned for information about the Dixon family, and especially about the girl Grace, whom she had taken chiefly upon instinct, because she had a kind, sweet, good face—a sad face, too, as if she had known trouble; and had, indeed, begged for the place, because "her heart was breaking for want of a child to look after."

"What an odd thing to say! Well, my heart wouldn't break for that, at any rate," laughed Adeline. "But really I can tell you nothing about the poor people of Easterham. We have no time to go about as your sister did. Bernard ought to know. Here he comes."

Hannah looked up, almost glad to see Mr. Rivers return. His society was not lively, but it was less dull than that of his sisters. Just to keep conversation going—for it had reached a very low ebb—she explained to him the matter under discussion, but he seemed to have forgotten all about it.

"If you remember, I brought the girl into your study, and you liked her appearance, and said I might engage her at once."

"Did I? then of course it is all right. Why talk it over any more? I assure you, girls, one of Miss Thelluson's great merits is that she does not talk things over. As I always tell her, she can act for herself, and never need consult me on anything."

"But you ought to be consulted," broke in Lady Rivers, "and in this matter especially. My dear Bernard, are you aware that, in your position, you ought to be very cautious? Miss Thelluson—a stranger—is of course ignorant of certain facts; otherwise Grace Dixon is the very last person she ought to bring into your household."

"Why so? The Dixons are an excellent family; have lived at Easterham Farm half as long as the Rivers have lived at the Moat-House."

"It is the more pity," said Lady Rivers, drawing herself up. "My dear Bernard, you have surely forgotten; and the subject is a little awkward to speak of before Miss Thelluson and the girls."

Hannah sat silent, expecting one of those sad stories only too common in all villages. And yet Grace Dixon looked so sad—so innocent, and her kindly and very respectable sisters had not seemed in the least ashamed of her.

"I cannot guess what you mean, Lady Rivers," said Bernard irritably. "I know nothing against the Dixons. The daughters were all well-conducted, and the sons——"

"It was one of the sons. But perhaps I had better not mention it."

The good lady had a habit of "not mentioning" facts, which, nevertheless, she allowed to leak out patently enough; and another habit of saying, in the sweetest way, the most unpleasant things. Her step-son had winced under them more than once to-day; as, Hannah noticed, he did now. Still he replied, with perfect politeness—

"I think you had better mention it. It cannot be anything very bad or I should have remembered it. Though I do forget things often—often," added he, relapsing into his usual dreary manner.

"If you will rouse yourself, you surely will remember this, and the discussion there was about it one evening here: a discussion in which your wife took part, and gave her opinion, though it was an opinion contrary to your own, and mine."

Bernard's countenance changed, as it did at the slightest mention of his lost darling. "Yes; I recall the matter now," he said, and stopped suddenly.

But Lady Rivers went on triumphant. "The scandal, Miss Thelluson, though I must apologise for referring to it before you, was just this. One of the brothers Dixon lost his wife, and six months after wanted to marry her sister, who had been keeping his house. He actually came to Mr. Rivers, as her clergyman, and asked him to marry them. A marriage, you understand, within the forbidden degrees—between a man and his deceased wife's sister."

She looked hard at Hannah, as if expecting her to be confused; but she was not: no more than when Lady Dunsmore had referred, though in a much more direct way, to the same subject. It was one so entirely removed from herself and her own personality, that she felt no more affected by it than she should have been if in Lord Dunsmore's drawing-room she had heard some one telling a story of how a father eloped with his children's governess. Of course such things were, but they did not concern her in the least.

Her entire innocence and composure seemed to shame even Lady Rivers; to Mr. Rivers, though at first he had coloured sensitively, they gave self-possession at once.

"Yes," he said, "I remember the whole story now. Dixon did

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come and ask me to marry him to his sister-in-law, which of course I refused, as it was against both the canon law and the law of the land."

"And the law of God also," said Lady Rivers sharply.

"That I did not argue; it was no business of mine. I was rather sorry for the man—he seemed to have no ill intent; but the marriage was impossible. However, this does not concern the rest of the Dixon family or the new nursemaid. What about her?"

But as often as he tried to slide away from the unpleasant topic his step-mother pertinaciously slid back again.

"Excuse me; I think it does concern the rest of the family. No one can touch pitch without being defiled, and a scandal like this affects every one connected with it. How did it end, Bernard?"

"I cannot tell. Probably Dixon went to some other and less scrupulous clergyman, or some distant parish, where they could put up banns and be married without being known; or, probably, he went back and they lived together without being married at all. Such cases happen continually. But why speak of them? Is it necessary to speak of unpleasant things?"

Yet the way he himself spoke of them, with a mixture of directness and grave simplicity, as only a pure-hearted man ever does speak, struck Hannah much. Also his quiet way of getting over an extremely awkward position, which to avoid would have been more awkward still. But Lady Rivers would not let him alone.

"And I suppose you think now, as I remember Mrs. Bernard did at the time, that you were wrong in refusing to marry the man?"

"No; I was right. I have been similarly applied to many times since, for the poor have strangely confused notions on this point, and I have always refused. The law makes these people brothers and sisters, therefore they cannot possibly be married. But, my dear Lady Rivers, let us leave a topic which really does not concern us. The matter of moment now, Aunt Hannah," turning towards her with the smile of a worried man who knows that there at least he shall find rest, "is that you and I must leave this warm fire-side and walk home through the wet together; unless, indeed, we make up our minds to swim."

The perfect freedom, and yet friendly respect of his manner, healed over all the discourtesies which Lady Rivers had so remorselessly inflicted. Miss Thelluson rose, thankfully enough, and they two started off in the pelting rain, for nobody ever thought of ordering the Moat-House carriage on a Sunday. Besides, Hannah never minded weather, and the storm seemed almost to do her brother-in-law good. Like all really manly men, he was roused and cheered by the necessity of fighting against something; perhaps, also, of protecting something. He wrapped his sister-in-law well up, and

sustained her steps carefully against the wild equinoctial blast, which was almost like pressing against a stone wall.

After they quitted the Moat-House, Mr. Rivers never referred to the matter which had been so obstinately and unpleasantly discussed in their presence. He seemed at once to accept it and ignore it, as those should whom fate has placed in any anomalous or difficult position that lays them open to many annoyances; which must, nevertheless, be borne, and are best borne with complete indifference. Hannah took her lesson from him; not without a certain respect, deeper than she had yet felt—and did the same.

They parted in the hall, he to go into his study, she to run eagerly up-stairs, drawn thither by the little merry voice which was heard through the nursery-door chattering its utterly unintelligible English. Hannah's face brightened into something almost like beauty at the sound. Rosa's father stopped to say—

“ You are getting very fond of my child ! ”

“ It would be strange if I were not. Is she not my niece—my own flesh and blood ? And, besides, I don't think there ever was such a child ! ” cried foolish Aunt Hannah. “ Just look there ! ”

The little round rosy face—it was rosy now, having grown so already in the pleasant new nursery, and under incessant loving care—was looking through the balustrades, making a vain effort to say “ Peep ! ” at least so Rosie's imaginative female worshippers declared it to be. Behind appeared Grace Dixon's pale, kind, sweet looks, moved almost into cheerfulness by the brightness of baby's. A pretty sight, and for the first time it seemed to bring a ray of sunshine into the widower's household. He sighed, but his sigh was less forlorn.

“ How happy the child looks ! Poor Rosie, she is not in the least like her mother—except in that sunshiny nature of hers. I hope she may keep it always.”

“ I hope so too, and I believe she will. I did not think her pretty at first ; but never—never was there such a touching child.”

“ It is your doing, then.”

“ And Grace's, too. She has been quite different even these few days since Grace had her. I hope,” and here Hannah could not help colouring a little, “ I hope you will not require me to send away Grace ? ”

“ No.” Mr. Rivers paused a minute, and then said gravely : “ I am sorry that anything should have vexed you to-day. Do not mind grandmama ; she speaks thoughtlessly sometimes ; but she means no harm. She likes interfering now and then ; but you can bear that, I know. Remember, I will always uphold you in matters concerning Rosie or the household, or anything else that you think right.”

“ Thank you,” replied Hannah warmly. She shook cordially the hand he gave, and ran up-stairs to “ Auntie's darling ” with a light heart.

LOVE'S COLOURS.

Not violets I gave my love,
That in their life are sweet and rare,
And deep in colour, as the heart
Whose every thought of her is prayer ;
For violets grow pale and dry,
And lose the semblance of her eye.

No lily's buds I gave my love,
Though she is white and pure as they ;
For they are cold to smell and touch,
And blossom but a single day ;
And press'd by love, in love's own page,
They yellow into early age.

But cyclamen I chose to give,
Whose pale white blossoms at the tips
(All else as driven snow) are pink,
And mind me of her perfect lips ;
Still till this flower is kept and old
Its worth to love is yet untold.

Old, kept, and kissed, it does not lose
As other flowers the hues they wear ;
Love is triumphant, and this bloom
Will never whiten from despair ;
Rather it deepens as it lies,
This flower that purples when it dies.

So shall my love, as years roll by,
Take kingly colours for its own ;
Sole master of her vanquish'd heart,
Am I not master of a throne ?
Crush'd by no foot, nor cast away,
My purple love shall rule the day.

C. C. FRASER-TYTLER.

A RUN ROUND IRELAND.

It is nearly thirty years ago since Thackeray was in Ireland—his *Sketch Book* having been published in the spring of 1843. It conveys a more vivid insight into the Irish character, as it then existed, than all the histories that have been written and all the speeches that have been made. The *Sketch Book* possesses, indeed, an interest of its own, quite apart from its subject-matter. It is the quarry out of which many immortal and imitable Irishmen have been taken. Captain Costigan and his compatriots, no doubt, are finished works of art: yet the hasty studies and the rough sketches are charmingly fresh and facile. There is nothing in *Pendennis* better than, or so good as, the picture of Uncle James (who sleeps somewhere about the piano-forte) in the Cork lodging-house calling, in an awful voice, on "Peggy" for "the materials," or of Peggy herself bringing up the coals on—a china plate!

But thirty years is a long time ago to people who live in an age which moves so fast as ours does. Even Thackeray grows out of date. A great gulf, moreover, lies between the Ireland of 1840 and the Ireland of 1870. The Great Famine lies between them; the Repeal of the Corn Laws, the decay of O'Connell, the rise of O'Brien, the French Republic, the Exodus to America, Fenianism, the Irish Church Bill, the Irish Land Bill, lie between them. I had often desired to visit Ireland, but as I could easily and comfortably reach Belfast any day in eight hours, it had happened, naturally enough, that all sorts of long and dull rides in French, Italian, and Swiss diligences had been preferred. At length, however, during the autumn of last year—anxious to learn for myself what this Irish Land question really implied—I set foot on the sister island, and spent a charming month among the most charming people and the most picturesque scenery in the world.

Ireland should be seen from the coast. The interior is level, boggy, and highly uninteresting; but the narrow rim which encloses the flat midland mosses is bold, grand, and strikingly original in character. The great mountain ranges lie within sight of the sea. Slieve Donard in County Down, Mweelrea in County Mayo, Carran-tual in Kerry, the loftiest hills in Ireland, are landmarks to mariners. The whole of the western coast is indented by bays and estuaries, where the Atlantic sparkles beneath precipices covered with heath, or breaks upon the whitest of sands. We resolved, therefore, before

starting, that we would, as far as practicable, follow the coast-line, and every traveller to Ireland should do as we did.

Of the voyage from Greenock to Belfast, it need only be said that the rough Irish Sea was, on that night, as smooth as a duck-pond. We were quite as lucky a month later, when we returned, and when, by the way, we had for fellow-passenger a man whose name was once in all men's mouths, Mr. Jefferson Davis, the President of the Southern States during the great rebellion—a spare, skinny, worn-looking old man, with eyes, however, in which the fiery unquenchable spirit shone with an almost fierce lustre. Belfast has few attractions to the idler—being, though in Ireland, very similar to most of our big, smoky, populous seats of industry—except for its noble lough and the white terraces on its pleasant background of hills.

"Why, sir," said an Antrim man to me, as we rattled away in the train to Portrush, "give us a long lease of the island, and in ten years we will cover it with factories!"—which would, no doubt, be an immense boon to people interested in cotton and flax, but in the meantime, to the idler at least, there are some things in the poor old country prettier even than factories.

To a Scotch eye, the landscape of those northern Irish counties has a singularly *clothed* look. This is due to the circumstance that the fields are of quite Lilliputian dimensions, and separated from each other by luxuriant thickets of hawthorn hedge and forest tree. Still, if not highly scientific, the farming appeared to be fairly good—very different from that which we were to see by-and-by in Connemara and Kerry. It was easy to distinguish the farms cultivated by scientific agriculturists from Perthshire and the Lothians;—all the natural brushwood had been carefully extirpated, the hedges had been cut down, and the ditches—those wonderful ditches with their brambles and their blackberries, and their profusion of wild-flowers—had been filled up. Well, high-farming, like the factories, has its advantages, no doubt; but one sometimes takes to wondering, with Mr. Ruskin, where on earth, at this rate, the Beautiful is to go to? Happily, some years must elapse before science succeeds in driving it out of Ireland, at least.

Portrush is the Brighton of the North of Ireland people, and they believe in it as Americans are said to believe in Paris. To the natural eye, it presents a collection of bran new houses where the whitewash is hardly dry, and the roofs have been only provisionally slated in; where the local gentry—the Belfast gentry, that is—congregate unpleasantly; and where the inns and the innkeepers, and the cars and the car-drivers, and the donkeys and the donkey-boys, have entered into a general conspiracy to swindle the unsuspecting traveller. Yet in justice it must be added, that the broad stretch of yellow sands, the sheep and rabbit tracks along the breezy heights, the green, rocky islands at our feet, and the phantom island on the horizon (Scotland it is), are very pleasant. The ladies have an

excellent bathing-place, and they may be seen every forenoon going from and returning to the hotel, in a costume that is admirably suited—for the water.

One is not surprised that the natives of this watering-place should be disposed to "take advantage" (shall I say?) of the innocent tourist, seeing that they are in the immediate vicinity of that gigantic swindle, the Giant's Causeway—a marine roadway, which, except to the scientific eye, is barely visible even at low water. I do not know any place on this earth (not even Killarney) where humbug is so transcendent as on that noble Antrim coast. The people seem to me to unite Scotch "canniness" and Irish "blarney" in a quite surprising way. (It is a mixed race, to be sure; the first Scotch settlers taking wives to themselves from the daughters of the original owners of the soil, along with the soil itself.) The man who drives our car treats us to a selection from the good old native jokes (*e.g.*, "Our climate is so healthy, sir, that we had to kill an ould man to open a new churchyard," and so on), and concludes by warning us that the guides at the Causeway are consummate scamps, barrin' always "Larry O'Neil, a friend of me own," who will see that we are duly protected. The unclean birds swoop upon us the moment we arrive, but Larry, who has marked us for his own, waves them majestically aside. "These are the boatmen," says Larry, pointing to a piratical-looking group, and suggests (the swindle being a joint-stock affair) that we should visit the caves by sea. "The water was as smooth as a rug, barrin' a bit jabble." But we, who had been bred among the rocks, knew what "a bit jabble" meant, and we saw an unfortunate boat-load vainly attempting to enter a cave, into which the swell was breaking whitely, and we declined. Then we were taken possession of bodily by the guide, who informed us that his services were paid for "according to distance," and whose dreary mechanical eloquence about hexagons and pentagons, and steucans and plaiskins, and giants' jaws and organs, and pulpits and bag-pipes, we urgently but ineffectively endeavoured to abridge. A guide of any sort is utterly unnecessary. A cart-road leads down from the hotel to the shore, and once there you have only to use your eyes. You can't lose your way, for the great Chimney headland closes in on the east, and there is just one goat-track from the bay up the cliff, of which indeed the guide will say nothing, lest the victim, before the punishment is finished, should take courage and escape from his claws. I walked down the Causeway to the very lip of the sea, under pretence of sketching the scenery, hoping thus to rid myself of this pitiless inquisitor, with his glassy eyes and his false mouth. But the brute was at my side before I was well seated. There was a deep, dark pool at my elbow, and the twilight shadows were falling, and the rock was slippery, and—Heaven forgive me!—if I had been quite certain that the rascal could not swim, I believe I would have pitched him in.

These guides are certainly arrant nuisances, and so are the boys and the lame beggars (who are as pious as King William—always calling upon the name of Our Lady), and the whisky-women, and the itinerant vendors of fossils, and minerals, and photographs, and dried seaweed. The only human creature there who elicited a spark of kindly feeling from our hearts was a handsome, delicate, clever-looking lad who followed us for some time with a box of photographs. "I think you might be taking one," he urged, in a gentle, persuasive, argumentative tone, as if he benevolently considered our welfare only, and had personally no interest in the matter. The best thing you can do is to give the first guide you meet half-a-crown on condition that he will hold his own tongue and keep his friends out of reach. And your half-crown will be profitably spent, for the precipices around the Giant's Causeway, rising from two to four hundred feet, are simply magnificent. So sit down alone, your sentry in the distance, and drink in their stern, sombre beauty. And, as you sit, the awe of the great rocks will come upon you—the great rocks which have stood firm while the generations of men have been swept away like the leaves, and which have looked down so long in silence on this fierce and treacherous Northern Sea, which even now, as a child in its sleep, is smiling innocently at the heaven!

The white rocks near the Castle of Dunluce, though less grand than those farther east, are perhaps more fantastically poetic. The sea has worn the limestone into pillars, and hollow caverns, and wonderful grotesque arches, such as span the basilicas of Venice and Cordova. The vast pile of Dunluce looks best from the mainland, and to cross the narrow arch which bridges the chasm is, for a lady, even in calm weather, a somewhat perilous feat. During a gale, unless she can keep her head steady and her crinoline well in hand, the chance is that she is expanded into a sort of balloon and carried out to sea.

By Coleraine and the marshy *wild-ducky* flats of the Bann, and along the stony sea-margin—the surf at times dashing over the rails—and then across the low-lying alluvial strath, where the farmer must be sailor and fowler as well, for every farmhouse has its canal, and its barge, and its duck-boat with swivel-gun at the stern, which stretches along the Lough or Estuary of the Foyle; and thus—half by sea, and half by land, as it were—we enter the famous capital of Londonderry.

A classic junction-station was passed on the route—Newton, leading to Limavaddy, wherein abode (and may still abide) that Peggy to whom Thackeray addressed the delightful lyric which everybody knows by heart:—

"Presently a maid
Enters with the liquor
(Half-a-pint of ale
Frothing in a beaker).

Gods! I didn't know
 What my beating heart meant,
 Hebe's self, I thought,
 Entered the apartment.
 As she came she smiled,
 And the smile bewitching,
 On my word and honour,
 Lighted all the kitchen."

The austere conditions of railway travelling, and other considerations, prevented us from visiting this romantic shrine. The "other considerations" may be guessed. If the young lady was (say) twenty years of age in 1840, she must be now upwards of fifty. *Venit ineluctabile tempus!* But the Peggy of the ballad never grows old; she retains an immortal bloom: for she has been dipt in poesy, and poesy preserves the complexion better than any dye. To have met an elderly woman—somewhat stout, perchance, and florid withal—going to market with the family pig, it might be, and to have been told, "Lo this is the beautiful Peggy whom the poet adored!" would have made a fit text for the saddest of homilies. Too wise to allow ourselves to be rudely disenchanted, we did not take the junction train to Limavaddy.

It may be noted, moreover, that that rocky Donegal coast across the Foyle must be worth exploring. Even from this distance its rock and mountain scenery is imposing. Away at the farthest point you see one or two detached pieces of rock—the fragments of some old Titanic warfare—rising out of the deep. On one of these, a few weeks later, during a tremendous gale, the *Cambria* struck, and, with every soul on board save one, went down.

I mean to write a little volume one of these days, to be called "A Book for my Boys" (only they are girls, as we say in Ireland), which is to contain a simple and unembellished narrative of some of the finest events which have been transacted on a planet where a good deal of meanness and selfishness prevail. "See," it will say to them in effect, "what a great creature man becomes when he is manly and magnanimous!" Among these relations of sublime virtue, the defence of Derry will occupy a foremost place. It was indeed a great defence, scarcely, I suppose, surpassed in history, even by Sparta and the Dutch towns. "Sir," said a plain Derry farmer to me as the Northern Counties' train took us leisurely up the banks of the Foyle, with the restrained and demure elation of speech which represents a Scotchman's emotion, "you see the white stone across the river? In that stone the boom was fixed." Involuntarily I raised my hat—my wide-awake, to be precise—in memory of the great deliverance.

The streets of Derry are as steep as the lanes that connect the Cowgate and Canongate of Edinburgh, and like them must have been (and still are apparently) well-adapted for street fighting. Had the French-Irish army succeeded in making a practicable breach in

the walls, the streets themselves might have been powerfully defended. But it never got inside the walls ; and when one regards closely these poor, slight, unscientific defences, one begins to see that the calm resolution of the imprisoned Protestants to die but never to yield really reached an heroic altitude. Derry still preserves her walls with somewhat of religious reverence, though the bill-sticker appears to find them handy. The contents of that morning's *Derry Standard*, a recommendation of Holloway's ointment, and a proclamation by the mayor and magistrates against holding processions, were rather too plainly visible at various points. The proclamation was directed against an unfortunate weakness of the Protestant community, which induces them to hold in honour and keep in remembrance what is certainly the most memorable event in Irish history. That Irishmen should not quite have forgotten their past (as we have done) appears to be regarded as a deplorable offence, not by the Mayor and aldermen only, but by the Chief Secretary and the Lord-Lieutenant, for the proclamation had been enforced, we heard, by the presence of a couple of English regiments.

Of course I climbed up the long stair to the cathedral belfry (looking at the captured French standard staves by the way—holy relics before which any man may fitly uncover), and surveyed the scene which Walker and Baker had so often surveyed together, the white walls of the beleaguered town, the rich green strath, the broad blue expanse of the Foyle below the Water Gate. A thin silver line, winding through sandy bents, guides the eye to the horizon sky which reflects the sea where Kirke's ships lay idle during many weary weeks.

The drive to Enniskillen was diversified by the presence of a portly parish priest, a soft, dissipated-looking young farmer—who showed, however, great respect to his “riverance”—and a true blue Derry Protestant, who favoured us with his political sentiments without the least reserve. Ireland, according to his view, had never been prosperous except when governed as a dependency and by martial law. A strict, stern, God-fearing governor, who would stand no nonsense, was the man for the place. If they could get Governor Eyre, of Jamacia, for instance, to take the reins, tranquillity would be restored in a week. It was simple insanity to tell the Irish Celt (as Mr. Gladstone was doing) to govern himself. He was incapable of governing. On the other hand, he liked being led. It was his nature to follow. The Irish soldiers and the Irish constabulary were the best in the world.

It was dark when we drove into the island-town, and up the long steep street which leads to the hotel. The night was wild and tempestuous and, until morning, as Mr. Tennyson says, we heard

“The ripple washing in the reeds,
And the wild water lapping on the crag.”

By the time breakfast was finished the storm had somewhat abated,

and I rowed down Lough Erne as far as Devenish. The lake is pretty enough, in a quiet, sylvan, "wood-and-water" way, and the round tower, they say, is the finest in Ireland. The wild-fowl shooting, I should fancy, must be something superb in winter. There are miles of bulrushes and forests of flags, where every duck and diver in the arctic zone might find shelter. The wind rose as we passed Devenish, and we were fairly blown ashore on a sandy beach, where real tiny waves were breaking whitely. Later in the day we took the rail to Bundoran, and saw the lower reaches of the lake. The River Erne, into which it discharges its waters, is a rapid, impetuous stream, with deep pools and silvery shallows dear to the angler's heart.

Bundoran, the fashionable watering-place of the west, must be the windiest place in the island. At least, it blew hard all the time we were there; and as there is not a stick in the neighbourhood, except the flag-staff at the coast-guard station, the little town gets the undivided benefit of a fine, stringent, breeze fresh from the Atlantic. During winter nights the west wind must sweep that long, high, single, melancholy street like a charge of grape. As we stood shivering at the office of the Sligo car, we witnessed a curious scene. We had brought the Dublin papers with us, and a crowd had collected in front of the office to hear the latest news. The schoolmaster mounted a whisky barrel which stood "conva niant." Then the *Irish Times* was unfolded, and the latest news was read aloud amid the noisy comments of an Irish crowd. Poor fellows! they were French to a man, and the announcement that MacMahon had won a bloody victory (for the Irish press systematically deceived its readers) was greeted with a clamour of delight. "Arrah! boys, he'll be avin' with them shortly." "The ould marshal will bate them yet." And so on, and so on, in the confident Irish fashion.

Alas! alas! When late that evening—Saturday, 3rd September, 1870—we arrived at Sligo, the limp-looking waiter inquired listlessly, "Have you hurd the telegram? The Emperor has surrendered, and the whole French army is taken prisoner." I wonder how our poor rustic friends at Bundoran received the startling intelligence—intelligence which made that dim Sligo coffee-room and that melancholy waiter memorable to us for many a day?

The windy ride to Sligo that afternoon was our first experience of car-travelling in Ireland. The public car consists of two common cars hooked together, and is capable of containing any number of passengers and any quantity of luggage. It was here that we had the good fortune to make the acquaintance of a fellow-traveller, who was our companion for a delightful week among the wildest scenery of the west—a don of the English Church—a bright, brilliant, genial, dignitary, with a classic jest or a Greek pun ready on every occasion, however unpropitious. We came to call him "John of Tuam," from an incident that shall be presently narrated; and, as John of Tuam, our good friend may without offence appear in this narrative. For

the next fortnight we travelled between four and five hundred miles almost exclusively in cars, public or private, and we came to enjoy car-travelling amazingly. Even the public car (carrying the mails it may be) does not appear to pay any attention to stated hours,—nobody does in Ireland. It leaves when the driver is ready, and it arrives when the horses choose. You feel with infinite satisfaction that you have reached a part of the world where no one is in a hurry. The feverish restlessness of our civilisation is subdued by that soft air and that "melancholy ocean." The song of the lotus-eater should be put into the mouth of a Connemara girl, with eyes black as coal, and petticoat red as madder can make it. The Bundoran driver was, I think, the most leisurely man I ever had the pleasure of meeting. He was always pulling up. The wind carried away his hat before we started, and we had to wait a quarter of an hour until it was recovered. We had barely started when we met the local post on his way home from the inland hills. The local post was mounted on a donkey carrying a couple of panniers, behind which his (the post's, not the donkey's) legs were seen dangling within an inch of the ground. Of course we pulled up. "God be with you, Mick," said our driver, "the gentlemen would like to hear the history of the moniment"—a monument or Irish cross on the roadside which we were discussing at the moment. So we had the tale from Mick in a quite unabridged form. A little later on, when the horses were enjoying a spasmodic canter, a bare-footed woman rushed frantically after the car. Of course we pulled up. "Paddy Connar," exclaimed our breathless, bare-footed, bare-headed friend when she reached us, "Paddy Connar bid me give you this, and he'd be thankful if you'd bring sixpence worth of limin from Sligo for his daughter that's badly." It would have been unkind had we failed to inquire after Paddy Connar, and Paddy Connar's daughter, and the young Paddies. By-and-by the return car from Sligo appeared. Of course we pulled up—this time in an ominously deliberate fashion, actually putting on the drag!—and the following conversation took place.

First Driver. You're late to-night, Jerry?

Second Driver. Is it late I am?

First Driver (pulling out his watch leisurely). Twenty minutes past seven.

Second Driver (who has thus discovered that he is more than an hour behind time, smiling serenely). You don't mane it now?

And then the conversation between the friends is calmly resumed, until at length, after a long pause, it is made plain to them that they have not another word to say, and the respective journeys are resumed.

One great advantage of the car is that, your feet being close to the ground) you may step out whenever you feel inclined. In going through a mountainous district, where you are frequently forced to

dismount, the comfort of this arrangement can hardly be overrated. Of course the man or woman who travels much by car is occasionally drenched, in spite of umbrellas, and waterproofs, and rugs. Thackeray says somewhere that as the climate is moist the travelling conveyances are arranged so that you may get as much practice in being wet as possible—to acclimatise you. Still, if you are seated on the lee-side of a car that is moderately well-filled, you enjoy, for the most part, comparative immunity. "The water was actually wet," is the climax of satire in one of Heine's most satirical passages; but Irish rain (I don't speak of a real Connemara hail shower, such as pitched into us at Oughterarde) is decidedly *dry*. It is a fine, soft, warm rain, which gives you little discomfort while it is falling, and dries with surprising rapidity.

Our road lay through a rich country, the Bay of Donegal on the one hand, a curious precipitous battlement of hills (Truskmore being the highest peak) on the other. But the farming (except at Cliffony, which Lord Palmerston ploughed and planted with his usual energy) is simply detestable. Fields the size of "kail-yards," divided by slovenly turf dykes, and covered with a species of coarse yellow tansy, a donkey, a pig or two grubbing intelligently by the roadside, and a young man with a chimney-pot hat without a brim, and a long-tailed coat buttoned over nothing in particular, looking on;—this is what we witnessed from Bundoran to Kerry. We drove for hours along the shores of the Bay of Donegal—an estuary nobler than the Clyde at Bute or the Forth at Edinburgh—and did not see a single sail. It was a vast ocean solitude—a silent sea. One could not help feeling at such times that some mighty malign magician had cast the spell of paralysis over the land. The people would not work, the wheat would not grow, the fish (with which the bays teem) would not be caught.

According to English notions such a people should be profoundly unhappy. They have no trade, no agriculture, no fisheries. A thrifless race has no right to be happy. Yet these simple Irish don't seem to know that they are bound to be miserable. They don't seem to know that high-farming, and some acquaintance with the truths of political economy, are essential to rational enjoyment. The whole country-side was streaming out of Sligo on carts, and peat-carts, and donkeys, and Mayo ponies, as we drove in. Tremendous showers were coming down at brief intervals; they rose up, black and frowning, one by one, from the Atlantic, drifting across a gorgeous sunset, and when they did not break directly upon us we could look through them as through a dark veil of gauze at the golden world of cloudland beyond. But, though wet to the skin, the people were all in high good humour; old men with battered hats and swallow-tailed coats (where do all the old hats and swallow-tailed coats in Ireland come from?), finely featured, sad-eyed, soft-voiced, coquettishly-plaided Irish girls, swaggering young farmers, haggard old crones who jeered at us in

the wet, panniered donkeys, geese, and all. It had been market-day—besides, it was Saturday night—and they were as gay as poor naughty Paris used to be on a Sunday.

The town of Sligo, however, on a wet Sunday is not lively. There is nothing to look at from the hotel windows except the turbid water of the river which flows out of Lough Gill, and the pointed arches and lofty central tower of the abbey. Next morning, moreover, we were to start for Connemara, and the prospect of passing three or four days on an open car in a drizzle was decidedly dismal. The melancholy waiter refused to comfort us. He had come from Dublin, and rather despised the provinces. "It's a foine country, entirely," he said, with bitter sarcasm; "it rains three days out of four, and its brewing all day on the fourth." We almost determined to take the train to Athlone, and turn our backs on Connaught. A picture which I find in my note-book, representing a car covered with dripping umbrellas, wearily wending through the wet, while a cormorant or other water-bird sits on a point of rock and flaps his wings cheerfully, is entitled "How we saw Connemara." We began to fear that the long track of fine weather had come to an end. But after raining bitterly all night it cleared as the morning broke, and long before we reached Ballina the driver assured us that the storm had cleared the air, and that another week of glorious weather was before us.

It rained all Sunday, as I say, and yet, venturing out with waterproof and umbrella during the afternoon, I saw an old woman on her knees, with neither waterproof nor umbrella, before the little cross in front of the Catholic chapel (which is about as ugly as any Catholic chapel in Ireland, and that is saying a good deal). Half an hour thereafter, when I passed again, she was still on her knees. For what inexpiable offence was the poor old soul condemned to ask pardon in this rheumatic way?

A very pleasant and intelligent young farmer and cattle-dealer accompanied us to Ballina. His farm lay at the foot of the Ox Mountains, between which and the sea the road runs. It was a grand place, he told us, for wild geese in December and January, he and a friend having once shot as many as thirty-seven in the course of a night. The agriculture was of the simplest description; no green crops were raised, no stall-feeding was practised; but the donkeys and the cattle that were not disposed of at the autumn markets contrived to feed themselves during the winter months, with the assistance of a little meadow-hay which was scattered about the fields. There was little or no demand for agricultural produce; a goose cost a shilling, a duck eightpence, eggs sixpence the dozen, hares and rabbits might be had at a nominal price. We asked him what he thought of the Land Bill. It might do good, he answered, if it induced the small farmers to invest their savings in the land. And they were really wealthy; they had ever so many millions in bank. An old farmer and his wife mounted on a stout Mayo pony passed us

as we stopped to water our horses. I should have fancied from their appearance that they belonged to the poorest class of the peasantry, but our companion assured us that the old man was worth five hundred pounds at least. He had given his son-in-law one hundred pounds with his daughter; and, indeed, continued our informant, a girl in this class has no chance of being married unless she can bring a dowry of from £80 to £100 with her. Marriage is entirely a matter of barter between the girl's father and her intended, and no end of matches are broken off on a difference about the odd pounds.

Every intelligent man I met on the way south told me the same tale—only get the small farmers to invest their savings in the land. But will the Land Bill do this? Will the comparative fixity of tenure which it introduces induce them to take their hard-won silver out of the savings-bank and turn it into drains and manure? I had been all along opposed to the Land Bill, holding that the Irish during the past twenty years (in a rather hard school) had been slowly growing out of a number of social and political delusions, which the Bill was fitted to fix and perpetuate. But it is only fair to say that, so far as I could judge, the intelligence of Ireland is in favour of the measure, as containing within it the seeds of possible remedies, in the direction I have indicated, and others.

Flocks of geese, pigs, Mayo ponies, barefooted girls, and "a power of donkeys," appear to possess the enormous sea-like plain of moss which lies at the foot of the Ox Mountains. Splendid geese wander about the bogs in flocks of from twenty to forty; the pigs are active and vivacious, and forage on their own account along the high road in a highly grotesque way (indeed, the pig in Ireland is a fellow of infinite humour, and as unlike an English or Scotch pig as a boy brought up on the London streets is unlike the fat boy in "*Pickwick*"); the barefooted girls might be interesting if they were not so ugly; whereas the Mayo ponies and the Connemara donkeys are really beautiful creatures—models of elegance and energy, in their respective styles. The monthly market was being held at Ballina (through which, luckily, the River Moy runs, for the town is inconceivably dirty) when we arrived, and we found the pigs, and the geese, and the ponies, and the donkeys, and the girls, and the "boys," congregated in the market-place. There was a great deal of noise, but no fighting; and I may own at once that during my stay in Ireland I did not see a single fight. I don't believe that the Irishman is by nature a quarrelsome animal; he fights simply because he likes it; growing, in his own language, "blue-moulded for want of a bateing," he rides down to the fair, and trails his coat across the road in the simplest and purest spirit of recreation. I did not see a faction fight; but the most charming Irishwoman I met told me what it was like. A hundred sticks are raised simultaneously; for an instant (for an instant only, to enable the women to escape) they quiver in the air, as fir trees shake in the wind, and then down they

come with a noise like the patter of hailstones upon water on these old hats and heads. Meantime the fiddler plays on cheerfully, and the dancers continue their dance without concerning themselves about the fight—such is the force of habit.

The scenery along the stony margin of Lough Conn—the mighty summits of Nephin reflected in its clear depths—is certainly fine, though dry and arid, like a Scotchman's humour. It can be regarded, however, only as the overture to the opera. A few hours later, just as the sun was sinking, I reached the summit of the eminence which overlooks Westport. The singular cone of Croagh Patrick, flushed by the sunset, rose into the evening sky. Clew Bay lay at its feet—a shining ocean-lake, studded with a hundred emerald islands, green on gold. The vision quickly faded; the sun sank behind Clare or Achill; the car—which I had distanced—came up, and we rattled briskly through the twilight woods into the pleasant little town of Westport. The Roman Catholic Archbishop of the diocese—the valiant John of Tuam—had returned from Rome, having withstood, as it was said, the declaration of the dogma of infallibility, and the Westport “boys” were burning tar-barrels in his honour. They told us at the hotel, as we alighted, that the great priest was to arrive immediately, and—intelligence which was even more welcome—that the *table d'hôte* dinner was in progress. Making a hasty toilet, we entered the coffee-room, where our entrance, I observed, created a quite unusual sensation. By-and-by I heard a pretty young girl who sat next me—a demure little Protestant—whisper to her mother that the Archbishop was really quite a gentleman. I looked down the table, and discovered that our quiet and accomplished Anglican friend, who had in the meantime inadvertently resumed his black coat and white neck-tie, had been mistaken for the noisiest member of the Irish Catholic hierarchy. He had (although otherwise a really liberal man) a holy horror of Rome, and I am not sure that he felt flattered when he was informed of the *rôle* that had been assigned to him.

After dinner we went out and walked through the streets, and saw the young moon hanging over Croagh Patrick, and the bonfires lighting up the river and the trees which line the river. The people were very noisy, cheering the Archbishop uproariously when he arrived, obviously enjoying the bonfires and the whisky. I saw, however, very few of them (of the men, I mean) going to early mass next morning, though the fair sex turned out in force. We hear a great deal of the piety of the Irish Catholics, but I came away from Ireland with a strong conviction that there, as elsewhere, religion is being left pretty much to the women—a change surely, as regards Ireland at least, involving very momentous issues.

Clew Bay, and Croagh Patrick, and Clare Island, and remote, primitive, precipitous Achill, are places among which one would like to wander for a month, as I hope to do this autumn. But Connemara lies before us, and we must hasten on.

Of the scenery through which we passed as we drove to Clifden, it is altogether impossible (using pen and ink only) to convey any impression whatever. It grows in beauty at every step—it is beautiful along the rocky, wooded banks of the Errive; it is more beautiful at Leenane; the first view of the Twelve Pins, on rounding the Killaries, unites the positive, the comparative, and the superlative of loveliness. The descent on Killary Bay—a narrow inlet of the Atlantic, which penetrates, like a Norwegian fiord, deep among the mountains—can never be forgotten. The Atlantic winds for nine miles among hills, 2,000 to 3,000 feet in height, which rise sheer from the water. There is not a more retired and secluded tarn in the heart of Scotland; yet the white sea-birds are picking the herring spawn from its surface, and the sea-tide ebbs and flows, bearing with it that joyful sense of liberty which is unknown to the inland lake. To those who enjoy with profound enjoyment the glory and gloom of cloud and mountain and lake, this drive is certainly peerless. It is true that we saw it under the most favourable conditions. Connemara that day disclosed every shade of mountain passion, passing from grave to gay, from lively to severe, with swift versatility; tears, smiles, laughter, the tenderest light and shadow, the blaze of sunshine, the blackness of darkness, blent in exquisite union, or even more exquisite discord. It was a sparkling succession of dissolving views—a procession of all the noblest objects in nature stirred by as wild fancies and grotesque freaks as move humanity. In Scotland or Switzerland you may travel for hours without, as it were, changing your point of view; the same great mountain mass lies along the sky-line all day long; but the peculiarity of Connemara is, that, within a few miles of each other, twelve distinct hills—the Twelve Pins—rise from the plain, so that you cannot move a hundred yards without bringing some new mountain-peak or valley into view.

We were resting at the little inn at Leenane, which stands on the shore of Killary Bay, when the driver, entering, inquired in a severe tone, "Shall I bring the *rogues* out of the car, sir?" Three priests had occupied the seat of the car opposite to our own, and had been studiously avoided by our Anglican friend, as if any contact might affect the validity of his orders. He glanced at them involuntarily as the driver spoke; but it appeared presently that the interrogation had reference only to our railway wrappers, which had been left outside. It was almost dark when we reached Clifden, and were casually informed by the waiter in attendance that not a bed in the hotel was vacant. We ultimately succeeded in obtaining a room; but the English doctor of divinity and the three priests were turned adrift. Our friend would never exactly confess where he had been lodged; but my impression is that he passed the night in a four-bedded room, with his watch and purse concealed in the mattress. Irish inns, like misfortune, make us acquainted with strange bed-fellows.

The estate of the Martins of Ballynahinch extended from Clifden to

Galway, a distance of nearly fifty miles as the crow flies. This great family (Thackeray spent a week with the last Mr. Martin, and describes his princely hospitality) is now extinct, and a London insurance company have purchased their magnificent property. The company is not popular in the county. "Sir," said a patriotic sportsman, who was resident in the hotel, addressing, next morning, at the breakfast-table, the company in general, "not a gentleman in Connemara would demean himself by practising their dirty tricks. Once a year the tenants get formal notice to quit (on stamped paper), and the company—would you believe it?—makes every poor devil pay half-a-crown for the stamp!"

The country between Clifden and Oughterarde—forty miles of barren moss, with the Twelve Pins on one side and a string of lakes on the other—is very beautiful in the distance, but close at hand is very gloomy. The roofless walls of what had once been populous villages—which the hawthorn and the sweet-briar, indeed, are doing their best to conceal and hide away from our eyes—is a sight that even a political economist fails to regard with entire equanimity. Yet one would fain hope that some progress is being made, that the people, though sadly thinned, are better fed and better housed than their fathers were. I find, from the last report of the Census Commissioners, that the wretched mud cabins of the peasantry of Connaught are being gradually replaced by an improved class of dwelling-houses. These are the figures:—

	1841.	1861.	Increase.	Decrease.
Best class of Dwelling-houses . . .	2,165	3,438	1,371	
Second best	23,235	36,926	13,691	
Mud Cabins	217,792	123,256	—	94,536
			15,062	94,536

Begging in Connemara is a regular profession: the girls, in red petticoats, pretend to sell stockings; old men and women make a show of disposing of its white and rose-coloured marbles; but they are all beggars at heart, as persistent, merciless beggars as the children who follow the car by the hour on the chance of a half-penny. The spring of charity in the most benevolent heart is quickly dried up by this shameless, indecent, extortionate mendicancy.

Galway, after Derry, is, to my mind, the most interesting town in Irish history. There is abundance of ecclesiastical ruin in Ireland; it is in Galway alone that we recognise the remains of a strong and rich burgher life. Sir Henry Sidney described the citizens in his time as "refined," "of urbane and elegant manners," and as having "contracted no stain from their rude and unpolished neighbours." Galway, in fact, was the Venice or Genoa, the Bruges or Antwerp, of Ireland. Its citizens were partly of Norman, partly of Spanish extraction, and the ornate architecture of certain old castellated mansions, and the dark hair, the coal-black eyes, and the coquettish cloaks of the common women, may be looked upon as reliques of the

early alliance. But, to tell the plain truth, the fragments of the great free burgh that remain have been rudely defaced, and are difficult to discover; and, with one really splendid exception, I did not see among the lower classes in Ireland a single strikingly pretty woman. There is nothing picturesque about the Galway belles, at least, except their cloaks and their petticoats.

The story of the heroic Governor Lynch—a “great name” in the annals of Galway—who hanged his only son out of the upper window of his own house, is known over the world. The very window from which the wretched boy was hung is carefully preserved, and may be seen to this day. Yet it is now universally admitted that no such event took place, and that the story is a fable—as singular an illustration, surely, of the circumstantial growth of tradition as Mr. Mark Napier (who denies that the Wigton women were drowned) could desire.

Whoever looks over Galway bridge will see a pretty and altogether unusual sight—a thousand salmon marshalled in ranks, and wedged closely together, waiting for the rising of the waters to enable them to reach Lough Corrib. Also the tourist who stays at the Railway Hotel should not fail to mount to the roof, from which the old town with its picturesque belfry, the noble sweep of the bay, the hills of Clare, and the phantom-like islands of Arran, are seen to great advantage.

The workhouse at Galway, like all the provincial workhouses I visited in Ireland, is somewhat homely in style and arrangement, but none the less comfortable on that account I dare say. Nowhere did I see any evidence of harshness, and, though wanting the orderly perfection of the English or Scotch system, the whole arrangements appeared to me to be adapted to secure in a simple, unostentatious way the objects for which such institutions exist. Life, though not made utterly dismal, is not rendered unduly attractive. The vast, monotonous, machine-like routine of a huge city poorhouse must be a terrible trial to the man or woman who has been taught to understand and value the happy freedom of domestic life; and in the very homeliness of these provincial institutions there is something home-like. In the hospital of the Galway workhouse I found that the sick were attended by the sisters of mercy attached to one of the conventional societies of that city. This is an admirable arrangement. These ladies (and they *are* ladies, many of them belonging, I was told, to the first families in the county) make the best of nurses, and the sick-room, under their kindly control, seemed to me to be the happiest and most cheerful room in the house. The grace of mercy, and charity, and pleasant human kindness lingered about it.

It is currently believed on this side St. George's Channel that pauperism has been kept within reasonable dimensions in Ireland by the relentless application of a poorhouse system which would not be tolerated in England or Scotland. The workhouse, it is said, is (except in very special cases) the only form of relief recognised by

law, and the workhouse is made as disagreeable as possible. Now, as regards this latter point, I am bound to say that the inmates of the Irish workhouses seemed to me to be quite as well treated as English or Scotch paupers. To say that they have *starved* pauperism to death in Ireland is simply absurd. I took some pains to examine the dietaries with a view to comparing them with the dietary sanctioned by the Board of Supervision in Scotland. It is enough to say here that the *quantity* of food allowed at each meal to the Irish pauper is absolutely greater than that allowed to the Scotch, although there is less variety, and the diet as a whole (chiefly from the absence of animal food) is less nutritious. It is perfectly clear that it is not the dread of starvation which keeps the Irishman out of the poorhouse; the fact is, that his restless and volatile temperament is radically unsuited to its close confinement and strict discipline, and during the summer months at least, as long as he has a leg to stand upon, no inducement will keep this natural vagabond within stone walls. He roams about the country-side, subsisting upon the benevolence of the common people and the chance charity of the tourist; in that mild climate he needs no shelter from the rain, which the Irish indeed habitually disregard; he can sleep in a ditch or among the heather, with the sky overhead, and he wakens as fresh as the lark that has passed the night in the next tuft of grass. The free vagrant instincts of the wild bird are implanted in the Irishman's soul, and it is impossible to eradicate them.

But, in point of fact, the Irish system, as a system of indoor relief intended to check and restrain the growth of pauperism, has broken down. Pauperism is growing in Ireland quite as rapidly as elsewhere, and relief in the workhouse only is ceasing to be strictly insisted on. It has been found impossible, I fancy, to induce boards of guardians to repress their benevolent instincts; and these boards contain, moreover, a large—an increasingly large—Irish element. At all events, the following figures, taken from the Reports of the Poor-Law Commissioners, appear to be conclusive:—In 1857, 186,235 paupers received relief in the workhouse, and only 4,588 received indoor relief. In 1867, 258,650 persons received relief in the workhouse, but no less than 58,696 received outdoor relief.

I have alluded to the sisters of mercy who attend the workhouse hospital. The fact is that Galway, as the centre of the most Catholic part of Ireland, swarms with nuns. Thackeray went to see a nunnery at Cork, and was far from being edified by what he saw there. There is a great deal of truth in his picture, of which the following are some of the most characteristic bits:—

"After having seen a couple of these little cells, we left the corridors in which they were, and were conducted, with a sort of pride on the nun's part, I thought, into the grand room of the convent—a parlour with pictures of saints and a gay paper, and a series of small fineries such only as women very idle know how to make. There were some portraits in the room, one an atrocious daub of an ugly old woman, surrounded by children still more hideous. Somebody had told the

poor nun that this was a fine thing, and she believed it—heaven bless her!—quite implicitly; nor is the picture of the ugly old Canadian woman the first reputation that has been made this way. Then, from the fine parlour we went to the museum. I don't know how we should be curious of such trifles; but the chronicling of small-beer is the main business of life, people only differing, as Tom Moore wisely says, in one of his best poems, about their own peculiar tap. The poor nuns' little collection of gimcracks was displayed in great state; there were spars in one drawer, and, I think, a Chinese shoe and some Indian wares in another; and some medals of the Popes, and a couple of score of coins; and a clean glass case full of antique works of French theology of the distant period of Louis XV., to judge by the bindings; and this formed the main part of the museum. 'The chief objects were gathered together by a single nun,' said the sister with a look of wonder; and she went prattling on, and leading us hither and thither, like a child showing her toys.

"What a strange mixture of pity and pleasure is it which comes over you sometimes, when a child takes you by the hand and leads you solemnly to some little treasure of its own—a feather, or a string of glass beads? I declare I have often looked at such with more delight than at diamonds, and felt the same sort of soft wonder examining the nuns' little treasure-chamber. There was something touching in the very poverty of it; had it been finer, it would not have been half so good. In the grille is a little wicket and a ledge before it. It is to this wicket that women are brought to kneel; and a bishop is in the chapel on the other side, and takes their hands in his and receives their vows. I had never seen the like before, and I own that I felt a sort of shudder at looking at the place. There rest the girl's knees as she offers herself up, and forswears the sacred affections which God gave her; there she kneels and denies for ever the beautiful duties of her being—no tender maternal yearnings, no gentle attachments are to be had for her or from her; there she kneels and commits suicide upon her heart. O honest Martin Luther! thank God you came to pull that infernal, wicked, unnatural altar down—that cursed Paganism. Let people, solitary, worn out by sorrow or oppressed with extreme remorse, retire to such places; fly and beat your breasts in caverns and wildernesses, O women, if you will, but be Magdalens first. It is shameful that any young girl, with any vocation, however seemingly strong, should be allowed to bury herself in this small tomb of a few acres. Look at yonder nun—pretty, smiling, graceful, and young—what has God's world done to her that she should run from it, or she done to the world that she should avoid it? What call has she to give up all her duties and affections; and would she not be best serving God with a husband at her side and a child on her knee?"

This is very good and very true, from its point of view; yet, after seeing what those women are doing in Ireland, I cannot help feeling that it is slightly sentimental in colouring. I saw the sisters tending the sick in the Galway hospitals, and the nuns teaching the children in the convent of the Holy Cross at Kenmare. Among these excellent women there is no indication of that intellectual inactivity and torpor which we are apt to associate with the "religious" vocation; on the contrary, they seemed to me to be ceaselessly occupied, and they combined with a certain simplicity of interest and character the practical shrewdness of good nurses and good teachers. At Kenmare the convent school is one of the prettiest sights in the world: the happiness of bands of young, clean, rosy children lightens up the convent walls, and the pale faces of the staid elderly ladies who teach them how to work and paint and compose in all sorts of really tender and graceful ways.

Between Galway and Killarney we visited Athenry, Ennis, and Limerick. There is a wonderful collection of ancient ruins at Athenry—castles and chapels and abbeys and gateways—for it was the early capital of the west, long before the Norman adventurers landed at Galway Bay. Ennis is as dull as its own ditches; whereas, after Dublin, Limerick is the liveliest, cheeriest, and most bustling town in Ireland, and the view from the tower of its strong, castle-like cathedral, up and down the Shannon, is very fine. The *spatch-cock* on which we dined at the Royal was also an event to be remembered.

Lord Macaulay waxes finely eloquent over Kerry: “The south-western part of Kerry is now well known as the most beautiful tract in the British Isles. The mountains, the glens, the capes stretching far into the Atlantic, the crags on which the eagles build, the rivulets brawling down rocky passes, the lakes overhung by groves in which the wild deer finds covert, attract every summer crowds of wanderers sated with the business and the pleasures of great cities. The beauties of that country are indeed too often hidden in the mist and rain which the west wind brings up from a boundless ocean. But in the rare days when the sun shines out in all his glory the landscape has a freshness and a warmth of colouring seldom found in our latitude. The myrtle loves the soil, the arbutus thrives better than even on the sunny shore of Calabria. The turf is of livelier hue than elsewhere; the hills glow with a richer purple; the varnish of the holly and ivy is more glossy; and berries of a brighter red peep through foliage of a brighter green.” It cannot be denied that in certain respects Kerry merits these handsome compliments.

The guide-books are of opinion that the Killarney lakes are the finest in the kingdom. This is a complete mistake. Derwentwater, for instance—lying as it does in a sort of mountain cup—is surrounded on every side by lofty hills. The hills on the south and west of Killarney are of fairish size and beauty, but to the east and north the country is flat and unpicturesque. At Derwentwater the visitor enjoys the most perfect freedom and seclusion. He may wander along the beach at will, or row himself from one bay to another all day long. At Killarney, on the other hand, a high wall shuts the lakes off from the high road (even the wild Torec waterfall is kept under lock and key!), and the tourist is allowed to enter only by the courtesy of the proprietors—Mr. Herbert, Lord Castlerosse, and others. Servants are placed at the different gates, and the visitor who does not “tip” them is considered shabby. He cannot move a hundred yards without being persecuted by guides and beggars and boatmen and hags who sell whisky and toys made (or said to be made) of the arbutus. He is not permitted to float lazily about on the water by himself—he must take a crew of hotel boatmen, and the hotel boatmen are got up like the royal navy in a pantomime. There are certain stereotyped views which he is required under stringent penalties to admire, where the horse stops of its own accord (for what reason? the sagacious, speculative beast no doubt occasionally inquires), and where the driver

repeats the lesson he has got by heart—how the Queen declared, how the Lord-Liftnant remarked, &c., &c.; here are certain stereotyped excursions (none of them more than twelve or fifteen miles in length), for which as solemn preparation is made—boatmen and guides and buglers and ponies and cannon—as if he were going to cross the Desert, and which cost nearly as much; every echo has been ticketed, every stile has been paid for, until natural grace, simplicity, and sweetness have been utterly banished. Killarney, in short, like the Causeway, is a tremendous humbug.

Yet, were it possible to saunter about the beach and dawdle among the islands, the lakes, I venture to think, would be found to possess a unique beauty of their own. Rose light and purple shadow, sternness and sweetness, the pine and the arbutus, the wild deer and the eagle, the humming-bird moth and the kingfisher, the gloom and grandeur of mountain tarn and the smooth softness of summer lawns, rare flowering shrubs and majestic tree-like ferns, solitary heights where the strongest head turns giddy, and long, winding, island drives where every turn of the road discloses some fresh charm of dainty smiling bay, or green wilderness of reeds, or glint of sunshine upon the mountain shoulder—such is Killarney. To those who desire to see these delightful combinations with as little humbug and pretence as possible, I can cordially recommend Mr. George Ross's inn at Muckross, which is simple and honest in all its arrangements, and is frequented by no vermin (human or other) except wasps. Of these there was an unlimited supply; but I am bound to say that, though we broke several panes of glass while engaged in the pursuit, none of us were stung. I am inclined to conclude, after our experience at Muckross, that the wasp has been misunderstood. The Autobiography of an Unappreciated Wasp (showing how soft and gentle and amiable he is by nature, before suspicion and persecution have soured his temper) is a subject which the author of the "History of Frederick the Great" might be expected to treat with advantage.

When Lord Macaulay wrote the words which I have quoted he must have been thinking, not of Killarney, but of one of the noble Atlantic bays—Bantry, Kenmare, or Dingle—which make the sea-board of Kerry famous. We were on our way to visit a friend whose name has long been, and long will be, illustrious in English literature; and the week which we spent with him on the Bay of—well, Dingle, let us say—will not be quickly forgotten. The "harbour" on which the house stands is surrounded on all sides by lofty mountains, which shut off the profane world. The hills are bare of timber; but around the lawn forest trees and rare shrubs, hollies, laurels, and hedges of fuchsias, the pampas grass and the arbutus, flourish luxuriantly. To see curious green-house plants, rich in foliage or brilliant in colour—such as the myrtle, the hydrangea, and the rare rhododendrons—growing down to high-water mark, is a new experience to the Scottish horticulturist. The woods are carpeted with ferns in autumn, and the loveliest wild flowers imaginable are found in spring. Great

dragon-flies sweep across the heather, and the beautiful hummingbird moth flutters among the roses and geraniums. Nor are more material attractions wanting—the land flows, so to speak, with milk and honey. There are real Scotch grouse on the mountain tops (two thousand feet above us), where they find it cooler than in the valleys. There are hares, and rabbits, and wild duck ; and in winter, at least, the woodcock shooting is superb. There are salmon lying by the score in the long deep reaches of the river, just above the national school (which, in spite of the priests, is well frequented by little Patsseys and Noreys, *as the first step to the States*—that Eldorado of the Irishman's imagination). There is an oyster-bed on the beach, and place, soles, turbot, lobster, in the bay. Our host appears to possess the exclusive right to the oyster fisheries, and he gets as many white fish and salmon each morning in his nets as a considerable household can consume. There are, moreover, water birds of various kinds ; but no one cares to meddle with them ; so that, at twilight, you hear close at hand the wild wail of the curlew or the hoarse call of the heron, and next morning, when you go down to bathe, the cormorants gaze at you with the utmost composure. What more can the heart of man desire ?

Respecting the incidents of that pleasant visit, this is not the place to speak. How, in our friend's yacht, we beat up and down the bay from one point of vantage to another ; how we visited the old church-yard, where—

THE LAST REMAINS OF
MAC FINNAN DHU,
PATER PATRLE !

are deposited ; how we were lost in the mist among the mountains ; how, aided by the most charming of antiquaries (since Monk barns), we opened a *rath* (or underground dwelling of the old natives), and how, on hands and feet, the great historian disappeared from our gaze into the bowels of the earth, and reappeared—Heavens ! if all the mud that the S—— R—— has cast at him had stuck, he could not have presented a more appalling spectacle ; how we ascended Knockatee, and inspected the Holy Loch and its rude shrine and ruder offerings ; how we walked and rowed and sketched and were happy in that glorious Kerry sunshine will be known hereafter, perhaps, when A.'s private diary is published by Mr. Strahan. In the meantime, I can only say that the Kerry *colouring* is gorgeous—Mr. W. Paton himself having scarcely achieved anything more brilliant and vivid. I never saw in the Mediterranean more superb mountain tints than I saw on this Kerry shore. The dull greys and browns of the north are exchanged for the rich combinations with which Capri and the Riviera are familiar. As we came down from Knockatee the Kerry mountains rose up round us, one by one, in blue and lake and purple and violet. Ere we reached the pier the sun had set amid flaming crimson and orange. The twilight bay reflected softly in its centre the more vivid orange of the sky, and

closer to the shore, on either side, the blue and purple shadows of the blue and purple mountains. I noted the colours at the moment, and now simply repeat what I then noted. Add to all this, that the bright yellow of the seaweed which fringes the rocks is quite unique.

On this side the bay, for twenty miles, my friend has no neighbours, except the Kerry cottars and fishermen; but on the other side there are a few country houses—D—, the residence of the last representative of a great old Irish house; P—, where the most genial, tolerant, and learned member of the Irish hierarchy enjoys his summer holiday; and G—, which the taste and munificence of a Catholic peer has transformed from a desolate rocky island into a veritable piece of fairyland. The Kerry cottars and fishermen are an interesting study, and they are best studied on Sunday. The Catholic chapel and its vicinity on that day present a curious scene. The people assemble on the high-road and in the neighbouring fields. The donkeys and ponies are taken out of the carts, and tethered to the bushes. Through the birch-trees that bend over the stream one sees young women, who have walked without shoes eight or ten or twelve miles, washing their feet in the clear water. (They don't wear shoes in rainy Ireland, on the principle that it is *drier* to wet their feet only, than their feet *plus* shoes and stockings.) Men and women and children are sitting about everywhere, a profusion of bright reds blazing through the green. Within the unfinished and unfurnished chapel the service is conducted in the most primitive fashion. The hum of voices comes in with the autumn sunshine, until the host is raised, when, for a few seconds, there is deep stillness, both within and without. Then the busy Irish tongue is unloosed again, and comparatively little attention is paid to the sermon by the audience, who enter and quit the building during the whole service in the most unceremonious way. Before finally dismissing the congregation the priest takes occasion to admonish those of them who are in arrear, or otherwise amenable to discipline (in a very homely style, and with an even racier flavour of the brogue than seasoned his sermon). "If Jerry Sullivan don't pay the rent for his sate, his sate will be—" But I forgot what, in that event, was to happen to Jerry's sitting. The graver censures of the Church are delivered in language which reminds a Scotch hearer of John Knox's description of the Catholic "cursing" before the Reformation: "*Ane has tynt a spurtle. There is ane flail stolen from them beyond the burn. The goodwife on the other side of the burn has tynt ane horn spoon. God's malison and mine I give to them that knows of this geere, and restores it not.*" The marriages are celebrated immediately after the service is concluded; but the marriage which we hoped to witness had to be postponed till later, in consequence of a dispute about the fees. The bridegroom considered that a five-pound note was liberal remuneration; whereas the priest insisted that the usual honorarium of £6 6s. should be forthcoming before the ceremony proceeded. There was a dead-lock. The "boys" who were waiting for the sport became un-

ruly, and very nearly assaulted their spiritual guide. A great clamour arose—that Irish clamour which is partly a cry of anger, partly a cry of entreaty—“Arrah!” “Wirra!” “Ah! ah!” “Shure, your riverence!” “His riverence is joking!” The priest had to arm himself with a heavy whip to keep his turbulent flock in order; but the matter, we understood, was ultimately compromised by the bride’s father, who undertook to pay the odd shillings. Then the congregation leave the chapel—gathering into groups as at a fair—eating, drinking, buying, selling, winding up with a dance on the green. If you are looking on, some pretty, swift-footed Kerry girl will insist on your dancing with her—it is the custom of the country—and you (though a member of the Sabbath Alliance) must submit with the best grace you can. Then, late in the afternoon, the inhabitants of each district leave together in a body, and the eagles in the loneliest glens are startled at dusk by the sounds of what always seemed to me in Southern Ireland a harsh and violent merriment. These poor Kerry peasants used to be terribly superstitious, and their superstition assumed all sorts of grotesque forms. But they are getting enlightened like the rest of us (much good may it do them!), and your boatmen or your keeper will tell you, in a tone of conscious superiority, that it is the “glin” folk alone who now believe in the supernatural.

Here these desultory notes must close. The other side of the island—Dublin and the eastern coast, and antiquarian Ireland (Ireland being richer, perhaps, in ecclesiastical antiquities than any other country) are too well known to justify a word of comment. Finally, let me say in a single sentence, that it is impossible to travel for a month in the sister island without being impressed by a painful sense of the profound hopelessness of the problem which England is trying to solve. “Look yonder,” exclaimed Thackeray, when describing the Cork rioters, “at those two hundred ragged fellow-subjects of yours! They are kind, good, pious, brutal, starving. If the priest tells them, there is scarce any penance they will not perform, there is scarcely any pitch of misery which they have not been known to endure, nor any degree of generosity of which they are not capable. But if a man comes among these people, and can afford to take land over their heads, or if he invents a machine which can work more economically than their labour, they will shoot the man down without mercy, murder him, or put him to horrible tortures, and glory almost in what they do. There stand the men; they are only separated from us by a few paces; they are as fond of their mothers and children as we are; their gratitude for small kindnesses shown to them is extraordinary; they are Christians as we are; but interfere with their interests, and they will murder you without pity.” What can the philanthropist or the statesman do for such a race—except under the stringent conditions recommended by our Derry friend in an earlier part of this paper?

SHIRLEY.

MARCH SONG.

'Twas in the month of March,
There were tassels on the larch,
And all the pretty birds were fain
 To pair, pair, pair.

The lowly violet root,
As we trod it under foot,
Protested by a sweetness which
 Was rare, rare, rare.

The leaves were croodled up
All about the buttercup,
But the little daisy winkéd with
 One eye, eye, eye.

The creatures all deferred,
Every flower and every bird,
To what the sun was doing in
 The sky, sky, sky.

Come out, come out, O Sun !
For the Spring time is begun,
And we're all of us of one mind with
 The mouse, mouse, mouse.

If we can but get good weather,
We'll be jolly altogether,
For we're very tired of living in
 The house, house, house.

B. R. P. BELLOC.

A DULL DAY IN A DULL PORT ON THE MEDITERRANEAN.

"STEWARD, what o'clock is it?" I asked, roused out of very uneasy slumbers, by the perception that the motion of the paddle-wheels had ceased.

"Nearly five, signora."

"And where are we?"

"In the port of ——, signora."

"Already! and it is not yet daylight; and the boat will remain in this dullest of dull ports till half-past ten at night, and I have not a single book to read! What on earth shall I do to pass the long, dull, dreary hours? And oh, how hot it is already!"

"The signora had better go to sleep again," said the steward calmly. "The police will not come on board for an hour or more; and no one can go on shore till after their visit. If the signora should get up, she cannot go on deck till the sailors have scrubbed it, or she will get wet. She had better go to sleep again quietly."

"Go to sleep again quietly! My good steward, that is more easily said than done in this close, stifling cabin, while there is such trampling and shouting overhead."

"Between two evils it is the part of the wise to choose the least," said the steward sententiously.

"But I can't sleep, steward, it is so dreadfully hot here."

"Behold, I will open this window, and she will soon see the sun unfold himself like a golden flower out of the blue sea!" said the steward poetically.

Meanwhile the other passengers in the ladies' cabin—a Greek lady with her three daughters, apparently between the ages of eight and thirteen—roused by my conversation with the steward, started out of their berths at every conceivable and inconceivable angle, and clamorously shouted to the steward to send their *Cameriera* to dress them. It did not appear to occur to either mother or children that any step towards dressing could be taken before the *Cameriera* appeared. When she did arrive, I judged by the magnificent array of plaits of hair artistically wound round her head, that she was an Italian. The Greek children threw themselves upon her, demanding to be dressed, as if they had been as utterly incapable of helping themselves as so many speaking dolls, while their mother silently unrolled her long black hair, with a languid gesture full of grace,

and seated herself with her back to the *Cameriera*. In an incredibly short time, as it seemed to me, a firm, smooth tower of jetty hair arose upon the graceful Greek head; and then, the clamour of the children becoming louder than ever, the mother condescended slowly to put on her own clothes, while the children were tossed and shaken into theirs by the Italian maid, amid so many

“Parole di dolor, accenti d’ ira
..... e suon di man con elle,”

that I regarded the whole matter as a pitched battle between deadly enemies, and was perfectly astounded, when the fierce encounter was at an end, to perceive that the combatants were on perfectly good terms with one another. When all were completely dressed, and dressed in very handsome clothes, too, I reflected with surprise that not the slightest notice had been taken of the unusually complete apparatus for washing and goodly array of towels provided in our cabin for ladies who might condescend to require such things. As the Greek lady was leaving the cabin, however, she happened to cast her eyes upon a tumbler, and a sudden thought appeared to strike her. She half filled it with water, and wrapping the corner of a towel round two fingers, dipped it into the tumbler, and softly wiped her face with it, observing to me, with an apologetic smile, that it was so warm that morning. The *Cameriera*, fired by the example, seized the tumbler, and hastily dashed a portion of its contents in the face of each of the three little girls in turn—stifling the indignant shout occasioned by the abrupt proceeding in the folds of a towel very fiercely and roughly applied. I burst into a hearty laugh at the sight, which in no way disconcerted her, for she turned to me, displaying her dazzling teeth in a bright smile, with the air of one well aware that she has done a clever thing, saying: “*Cosi si rinfrescano.*” (“Thus are they refreshed.”)

As soon as the Greeks had departed, I rose and dressed myself as slowly as possible; but although I spun out the process to as great a length as I could contrive to do, I saw with dismay, when all was done, that it was only seven o’clock, and again asked myself in despair, “How shall I get through this dreadful day?”

Of course it was open to me to go on shore; but could I walk about all day in those glaring white streets and squares, of which I knew every turning and corner? While I was debating the question in my mind, the “golden flower,” who had unfolded himself to some purpose, looked in at the cabin-window with a scorching glance so suggestive of his power at noon in the dusty streets of the city, as quite to put an end to my indecision. The steward’s oracular remark, that out of two evils the wise choose the least, appeared to me the essence of true philosophy. I would choose the lesser heat, though greater dulness, and remain on board. I went on deck, and tried to sketch the lighthouse and port, but was baffled and rendered giddy

by the drifting of the vessel to her anchor, and compelled to abandon an attempt which appeared likely to result in a fit of sea-sickness.

I was summoned to breakfast earlier than usual, because the captain, who had made a gorgeous toilet, and appeared, like Benedict, to have "rubbed himself with civet," so fragrant was his presence, was going to pass the day on shore. Breakfast is a great resource against ennui, when helped by such delicious grapes and peaches as shone on our table that morning; but even breakfast cannot be made to last for ever. The departure of the captain appeared my last chance of an incident, and I made the most of it, watching every detail of the lowering of his *lancia* with absorbing interest; but the *lancia* quickly became a speck, and finally vanished into the inner port out of sight. By this time the reflection of the golden flower upon the glittering water had become so insupportably dazzling, that I was compelled to seek the friendly darkness of the first-class saloon.

I looked in as I passed the obscure hole dignified by the name of the steward's cabin, which had become a perfect grove of dirty towels, beneath whose shade I perceived the philosopher and a friend fast asleep, and observed that each of them was firmly grasping an empty lemonade bottle in his hand, though there was a perfume in their shady grove, which was not that of lemonade.

I curled myself up on a corner of the sofa, behind the piano, in the deserted saloon; spread a large green fan over my face, as some protection against the flies and mosquitoes, and soon forgot the dullness and the heat in sleep.

I was presently roused by hearing the piano softly opened, and a well-known air from *Ernani* performed with much uncertainty of touch, and extreme simplicity of harmony. Looking quietly through the interstices of my fan, I perceived that the performer was a small cabin-boy, in the shortest blue trousers and most preternaturally stiff pink shirt I ever beheld—which rigid garment was, moreover, so ridiculously too large for him, that his queer little bullet head was only visible at rare intervals through the opening of the huge collar, the points of which were considerably higher than his eyes. When I did catch a glimpse of his face, it wore an expression of stealthy rapture, a union of ecstasy at his own performance—which I must observe to his credit was entirely executed with one finger—and fear lest I should wake and protest. Having gone through the *adagio* (extremely *adagio*) twice, with very few mistakes, the small musician, emboldened by impunity, rashly launched into the *allegro*, when, partly from the difficulty of executing the rapid passages with one finger, and partly from some imperfection of memory, the melody became so exceedingly confused as to call forth a perfect torrent of ironical applause from certain second-class passengers, who, in the absence of the "constituted authorities"—all of whom had gone ashore—had found their way to the door of the aristocratic first-class saloon.

The unfortunate little dilettante, then, for the first time, aware of

their presence, fled up the gangway with a howl of anguish, and a face far pinker than his remarkable shirt ; and I grieve to say, that except for one brief moment, when his presence was of no account, this history knows him no more. His disappearance was followed by a unanimous call upon a sergeant of riflemen, who apparently had some reputation among the group as a pianist, to favour the company with a specimen of his talents. It was very clear to me that he was burning to comply ; but looking sideways at me, he declared it was impossible to think of disturbing the signora by such music as he could offer. Of course the signora declared in her turn that if she had one desire more ardent and intense than every other, it was the desire she felt on that particular morning to hear a performance on the piano by a sergeant of riflemen ; and after a little more show of hesitation, for manner's sake, he allowed himself to be persuaded, and played a number of waltzes and polkas with considerable taste and spirit.

It was during the last of these that I observed a tall, portly figure, dressed from head to foot in white, and having the traditional white cap on his head, which it appears to be an article of religion for every Italian cook to wear, fitting so closely as to conceal all trace of hair, who had taken up his place at the door, and was leaning in a gracefully negligent attitude against it, in spite of the earnest whispered reproofs and even pushes of the steward, who appeared to have the strongest objection to the proceeding. It surprised me to see that *I* appeared to be the cause of the steward's protest, for every push he gave the new-comer was accompanied by an uneasy gesture towards me, though why he should suppose me likely to be less tolerant of the presence of the cook than of the bare-footed sailors, who, at the sound of the piano, had introduced themselves amongst us unquestioned, I could not conceive. Whatever his reasons, however, his remonstrances produced no effect upon the portly cook, who only laughed, shrugged his shoulders, and remained leaning, with folded arms, in the same attitude in which his remarkably handsome presence first attracted my attention.

The sergeant's *répertoire* was now exhausted, and he declared he did not know what to play. The steward, who by this time appeared to have remembered that he was, above all things, a philosopher, and had seated himself calmly on the table, smoking, suggested that the performer should try his hand at the chorus from the *Lombardi*, "*O Signore, del tetto natio.*" The sergeant did his best to comply, but his memory was far inferior to his good-will, and in spite of the constant corrections and suggestions whistled or hummed by the audience, his performance was so extremely unsatisfactory that the portly cook, who had been for some time wincing and writhing like a man in physical pain, could restrain himself no longer, but suddenly advancing to the piano, put his hand on the sergeant's shoulder with an air of quiet authority, saying—" *Lasciate fare a me*" ("Let me do it"). The other rose at once, and the cook, first bowing politely to

me, seated himself gravely on the music-stool and turned up the sleeves of his white jacket.

"What extraordinary hands for a cook!" thought I, as I looked at his long, white, supple fingers, which appeared quite out of keeping with his figure. But the next moment I had cause for far more surprise. The very first chord the man struck revealed the born artist, and electrified me. He seemed by that one chord to grasp, and, as it were, take possession of the entire instrument, which responded quivering to his touch, as if conscious of the master-hand. I could scarcely believe that that massive and dignified sound had issued from the same wires I had just heard jingling beneath the fingers of the sergeant. With that artistic instinct which seems to be inborn in the Italian people, the whole motley audience appeared to comprehend in an instant that we were about to hear music of a very different order from the last; a sort of sigh of satisfaction went round, and they all drew round the piano so noiselessly, that in that moment's interval of expectation I could distinctly hear the ticking of my watch.

After a few grand solemn modulations to prepare us for the theme, the magnificent chorus, which, as Giusti says, has "thrilled and enraptured so many hearts,"* swelled forth from that inferior little piano, with a power, grandeur, and pathos I have never heard surpassed by the most perfect orchestra, and rolled along, a glorious wave of solemn sound—now swelling, now sinking, and now rising again, as if its appeal to heaven were carried aloft on angels' wings. I felt a choking sensation in my throat, threatening to force tears from my eyes in spite of my English dread of all public show of emotion; but on looking round, I saw that the majority of my fellow-listeners were in tears, which they, less artificial than myself, were at no pains to conceal.

I glanced next at the musician: his large, dark eyes were looking straight before him, with the strange sightless gaze of one in a trance; and the expression of his face, while grave almost to severity, was that of a man hearkening with all his soul to sounds thrilling but remote, and difficult to catch.

When the last chord died away, there was one moment of deep silence, followed by a vociferous *bravo! ma bravissimo!* from all present; while the more enthusiastic rushed forward to kiss the performer, and clasp him in their arms with rapturous applause.

"What can be the motive of a genius, such as this man clearly is, in adopting the profession of a cook? and what a singular phenomenon he is altogether!" thought I, as I watched him submitting to these violent demonstrations with an air of amused condescension that was quite confounding to me. Suddenly he looked up, caught my eyes fixed wonderingly upon him, coloured, and, as if to cover his own embarrassment, dashed into a wild fantastic gallop, with a spirit, precision, and brilliancy of touch perfectly enchanting.

* "Che tanti cuori ha scossi ed inebriati."

An ugly little child, who had hitherto sat quiet on her mother's lap, now wriggled off it as if bitten by the tarantula, and commenced whirling round the narrow strip of floor between the sofa-bench that circled the walls of the saloon cabin and the long narrow table in the centre. Her example fired the sergeant, who, seizing the child's mother round the waist, began spinning round with her at a frantic pace, quickly followed by the rest of the second-class passengers, in spite of the outcries of the unfortunate steward, who protested that they were *tutti pazzi*, that the signora would be offended, that he should report the *scena* to the captain, &c., &c. The musician, with a wicked smile on his face, appeared inspired afresh by the steward's dismay; the gallop, at first only elfish in character, now became perfectly diabolic in its fantastic wildness, one strange variation succeeded another, each more breathless, bewildering, and eccentric than the last, until the sergeant, whose first partner had sunk exhausted on the sofa, suddenly flew at the steward himself, and in an instant had him whirling round and round as madly and excitedly as the wildest there. This was too much for the bare-footed sailors—the last image of constituted authority was insanely bounding and twirling before their eyes, and they too flung themselves into the midst, capering and twisting as if demented. And still the musician's *furore* appeared to increase; still did the gallop become more rapid, reckless, and fiendish; one by one each couple gave in, springing as they did so on the table or the sofa by a last supreme effort, so as at least to afford no obstacle to the mad career of those whose strength still held out, until finally none were left but the sergeant and steward, who kept it up until one perfectly unearthly variation completely vanquished even them, and they sank gasping upon the floor, amid the laughter, shouts, and vehement applause of all the others.

No sooner was the impromptu *sabbat* at an end, than, with the natural dignity and courtesy characteristic of the Italian lower classes, all present turned to me, apologising for the liberty taken, and assuring me that but for "*quel diavolo del nuovo cuoco*," they would never have so far forgotten *il buon senso ed il decoro*. Of course I assured them that I was exceedingly obliged, both to the cook and to them, for the most original and amusing ballet I had ever witnessed; and all of them resumed the serious, *quasi* severe expression habitual to the Italian countenance in repose.

And now a new astonishment awaited me in the mysterious behaviour of the cook. While I was answering the apologies of the company, he had unbuttoned the front of his white coat in order to take out his pocket-handkerchief to wipe the perspiration from his face, and unseen by all but myself, had unconsciously pulled out with it the end of a long roll of white cotton stuffing, which clearly formed the true sum and substance of his apparently goodly paunch.

As soon as he discovered his mistake, he tucked it in again with

extreme dexterity, while I, from unwillingness to annoy him, pretended to be looking in quite a different direction.

"*Ora basta!*" • he said, when this operation was completed, and again bowing politely to me, he arose to leave the cabin.

"No, Signor Matteo!" said the steward, laying his hands upon his shoulders; "it is too late to retire now. You have made me dance, whether I would or no, and now you must sing whether you will or no. *Una ballata!*"

"*Si, si, una ballata,*" echoed the company; "*si, si, una ballata,*" cried I, blindly following the general lead.

Matteo smiled, seated himself at the piano, played a sweet, sad prelude in a minor key, and sang, in a delicious tenor voice, with wonderful tenderness and expression, the strange and mournful ballad of which the following is the best translation I can offer, though it sadly lacks the wild, simple, and mournful pathos of the original:—

"Daughter, the night was made for sleep,
Why dost thou watch? why dost thou weep?
Who soweth love must sorrow reap;
Daughter, daughter, my daughter!"

"Mother, I can nor rest nor pray,
Six long months since he sail'd away;
This should have been our wedding-day;
Nello, Nello, my Nello!"

"Daughter, anon the day will break;
Six candles we to church will take,
And pray the Virgin for his sake;
Daughter, daughter, my daughter!"

"Mother, me seems the night wind cries,
'Lone on the sands thy lover lies,
With none to close his glazed eyes:'
Nello, Nello, my Nello!"

"Daughter, the gale is loud and wild,
By thy own heart thou art beguil'd;
Mother of Grace, look on my child;
Daughter, daughter, my daughter!"

"Mother, when Nello sail'd away
One kiss he asked, I said him nay;
The debt I owe, the debt I'll pay;
Nello, Nello, my Nello!"

"Daughter, the demon's cruel art
Wreaketh worst wrong through true love's smart;
Daughter come back, or break my heart!
Daughter, daughter, my daughter!"

"On sand-bed take, from willing bride,
This wedding kiss, death-sanctified;
Our coverlet the rising tide;
Nello, Nello, my Nello!"

* Now, enough.

When the plaintive refrain died away for the last time, the whole of the motley company assembled was silent. No one ventured to trust his voice with a *bravo!* and the singer himself sat still, with the same singular expression upon his face which I had noticed before—gazing a little upwards like a man in a waking dream and quite unconscious of his surroundings.

Suddenly the steward started to his feet, exclaiming—

“Behold the captain! He is now alongside, and he was to have remained in port all day. What can have brought him back? Away, Matteo!” he continued, anxiously and hurriedly addressing the cook. “Away all of you,” he said to the others. “Behold the captain! Lose me not his confidence and esteem.”

In an instant the cabin was cleared: the steward shut the piano and retired last, just as the captain’s voice was heard at the top of the cabin-stairs. At the door, however, he turned softly round, and said in an awful voice—

“Signora!”

“Well?” said I, quite disturbed at the grim solemnity of his manner. He answered not a word, but fixing his eyes earnestly on mine, with one warning finger upraised, he slowly achieved the most portentous wink I ever beheld, and vanished.

The next moment the captain entered, accompanied by a gentleman. He looked worried and out of temper.

“And so you refused utterly?” said his companion.

“Of course I did. Would you have me subject my passengers to such a horror, and, possibly, even endanger their lives? Absurd.”

“But somebody must help the poor creature.”

“True, but not at sea: let them go by railroad, where they can take a whole compartment to themselves, and if violence be necessary, use it, without shocking or endangering others.”

“But you know the doctor said the excitement of the railway journey would probably be fatal.”

“I know that I have refused, and that it was my duty to do so; that must suffice,” said the captain shortly. “*Diamine!*” he exclaimed, a moment after, looking through the cabin-window, “here is the lady herself come alongside. She must not come on board; I will not see her!”

And he ran quickly up the steps, leaving me much bewildered by the conversation I had heard, and the strange, excited manner of our usually placid and indolent-looking captain. What could be the danger to which he refused to expose his passengers? I did not like to question the gentleman who had entered with him, for he was walking up and down the saloon in such evident distress and agitation, that I feared to intrude. From time to time he stood still at the door, and listened anxiously to the sound of the voices on deck.

In about half an hour we saw the boat, which had brought the lady whose arrival had so troubled the captain, leave the vessel and return

towards the city ; but she was not in it. The captain now came down-stairs again, wiping his eyes, and said in a gloomy voice—

“ Well, it is done now. I’ve consented ; I could not resist the poor thing’s entreaties. Heaven only knows what the end will be.”

“ Bravo, captain, bravo ! ” exclaimed the other, embracing him with Italian fervour. “ You will never repent it, never ; you have done a good action.”

“ Humph ! ” said the captain doubtfully. “ We shall see if the passengers think so.”

“ Are there many ? ”

“ The second-class will be quite full to-night ; but there is only one lady first-class, except herself ; and I shall put *him* in the state cabin.”

“ All will go right, good captain—all will go right,” said the other ; and having once again embraced him, he ran joyfully on deck.

“ Humph ! ” said the captain again, very slowly, thoughtfully, and doubtfully.

“ Pray, captain,” said I, unable to be silent any longer, “ what is this mystery ? What is the danger we are to run ? ”

“ None, signora, as I fervently hope ; for I have taken every possible precaution. The truth is—I fear you will think it an ugly truth—I have consented to take a madman on board ; and as he is, at times, frightfully violent, I naturally felt very unwilling to expose my passengers to such painful scenes as must occur if we should be compelled to use force. I did not wish to take him, heaven knows ; I refused all his friends and brother officers, who came to me in port ; I came on board again solely to escape their importunities—but the poor lady, so young and so unhappy, when she followed me here herself, and wept so bitterly, and told me how her own and her children’s lives were not safe ; how her only hope was in the excellent asylum at A—— ; how the doctor told her a railway journey would kill him ; how she herself had now no other resource than to return to her family at N—— ; in fact, the signora already feels with me, and understands that I could not help myself. But I have five strong men coming on board with him, and they will keep guard over him day and night ; and, indeed, the doctor assures me the sea air will act as a narcotic and calm him ; so that I feel sure the signora agrees with me that it was a duty to take him ; that it is a good action, and that all will go right.”

I did not echo this sentiment. Indeed, I am afraid I felt very angry with the captain, and wished he had been less tender-hearted. I know I went on deck without making any reply to his harangue.

All my anger vanished, however, as soon as I had looked at the unhappy lady who had brought all this alarm and uneasiness upon us. She was sitting on deck, with her two pretty little children by her side, and gazing with a sort of resigned earnestness in the direction of the city—watching, as I learned from one of the sailors, for the boat that was to bring her unfortunate husband on board. She

was young and very handsome, but excessively pale and thin ; her dress, of rich materials, looked somewhat neglected, and her whole bearing was that of a person from whose mind one absorbing, overwhelming care had driven away every minor interest. I never saw a face expressive of such hopeless endurance. The two little children played prettily at her feet, happily unconscious of their great misfortune ; but their mother only roused herself to notice them when she feared their gambols might in any way annoy others. I sat and watched her for a long time, and a feeling of deep sympathy and tender pity crept over me, which induced me quite to forgive the captain. I wished to speak to her; but there was a reserved air about her, which, combined with the knowledge of her terrible misfortune, rendered it almost impossible to make the first advance. Suddenly she rose, and went eagerly to the side of the vessel. The captain joined her immediately after, and, following the direction of their eyes, I saw a boat coming rapidly towards us, filled, as it seemed to me, with carabineers. As it drew nearer, I could distinguish, seated in the midst of these, the unfortunate madman.

As soon as the boat came alongside, the poor lady called to her husband, and endeavoured to make him look up, but in vain. Three carabineers came on board first, then the Orderly, a young rifleman in undress uniform, with his arm affectionately placed round his former captain's waist, assisted up the steps the very ghastliest-looking being I ever beheld living and moving on this earth. The other two carabineers followed closely behind.

The madman had no hat upon his head under that scorching September sun. I heard afterwards that he had himself flung it into the sea. His shirt collar was thrown open. He wore an undress military jacket, strangely torn, and loose military trousers, also much torn about the ankles. With his arm round the neck of the young soldier who supported him, he staggered on deck, with fixed and glazed eyes, and a face expressive of hopeless misery, mingled with a sort of painful astonishment, which it was difficult to look at without tears. The look of physical and moral suffering about the man, as well as his extreme weakness, appeared to dispel all sense of fear in those who had gathered round. A dozen hands were ready to help him to a seat, and a dozen voices uttered cheering words of welcome ; but he heeded none. The carabineers ranged themselves behind his chair, as if desirous of keeping out of his sight ; the Orderly, whose hand he still held, kneeled down by his side ; the little boat pushed off again, taking back the gentleman who had pleaded the lady's cause with the captain ; and our strange and awful fellow-passenger was now to be one of us for two long days and nights.

There was a painful fascination for me in the madman's fixed and ghastly face, and I continued gazing at him against my will, quite unable to detach myself from the sight. It was affecting to observe the unceasing efforts made by the wife and the Orderly to induce

their poor charge to look at or reply to them. He remained immovable, sitting as steadily in the same attitude as if he had been cut in stone, with his hollow eyes staring always at the same spot upon the deck, as if fixed in a painful ecstasy by the sight of some horrible object lying there, and he seemed quite unconscious of all around him. One of the little children went up to him, and attempted to climb upon his knee, and then, without moving his eyes, he put the child away from him with his hand, with the action of a man who puts aside an annoying insect. I saw the tears rise to the poor mother's eyes at the sight, and was obliged to turn away, for I felt my own overflow.

At this moment the steward came to call us to dinner, and although the calm dignity of the philosopher's manner was undiminished, it struck me that the majestic serenity of his countenance was ruffled, and that he wore an air of anxiety which was new to me. As the lady who had lately come on board was the only first-class passenger except myself, and she had already dined, the captain and I were alone.

"This is quite the most tasteless and miserable *minestra* that ever I eat," exclaimed the captain. "If this is the best your boasted Neapolitan cook can do," he added, turning to the steward, "the sooner you get another the better."

"You see, captain," replied that dignified official, with a bland smile, "you were not expected to dine on board, and the signora, being English, had declined to have any *minestra* prepared for her; so that this has been hastily thrown together for you. Not every poet is an *improvisatore*," he added, resuming his usual sententious manner.

I looked at the man in utter amazement, for my wishes had never been consulted in any way; but the serene unconsciousness of his manner, completely unaffected by my astonishment, entirely vanquished me, and I was silent.

"By all the saints, what cutlets!" shouted the captain, when the next dish was uncovered; "they have scarcely *seen* the fire!"

"You are aware, captain," replied the imperturbable steward, "that it is thus that the English desire to have their meat. Matteo was thinking only of pleasing the signora."

"With great deference to the signora, I find these cutlets uneatable," said the captain.

"They are quite too underdone for me also," I answered, wondering within myself what it was that prevented me from unmasking the steward to the captain.

"They shall be cooked in an instant," said the steward, carrying away the dish. "Matteo has shown more zeal than discretion in his amiable desire to gratify the signora."

"Matteo's head appears to me to be turned by the signora," said the captain, laughing.

Presently the steward returned with the cutlets, dressed to a nicety; but it was very evident to me, from his crimson, heated face,

that he had cooked them himself, and my bewilderment and curiosity increased. "How will he contrive to hide the shortcomings of this incapable cook when he has no signora to throw the blame upon?" thought I.

The rest of the dinner passed off with only some dissatisfied grunts on the part of the captain, whose mind, fortunately for the steward, was so preoccupied by the thought of his queer passenger, that he paid far less attention to the dishes than was usual with him.

When the ill-dressed meal was at an end, I went to the ladies' cabin, and found the new inmate putting her children to bed. She politely expressed her hope that I should not be disturbed by the poor little things, and on my making the kindest answer I could think of, we fell into conversation. She told me the long sad story of the origin of her husband's malady in a terrible domestic affliction, followed by some professional troubles, incident to his appointment to a military station unsuited and distasteful to him; and described how she had endured her misery in silence, so long as there remained the slightest hope of cure; and how at length, when her own and her children's lives were in daily peril, she had reluctantly placed him in a country asylum, where he had been mismanaged, beaten and bled, till he became the wreck we saw. Then she had appealed to the military authorities for assistance, and was now, after endless difficulties, delays, and red-tapism of every description, conveying him, as a last hope, to the celebrated asylum at A—.

"But why are all those men with him?" said I. "Surely he is far too ill and too feeble to hurt any one, even if he should try."

"Oh heavens! signora, when the fits of rage come upon him, those men could not hold him even now, without the help of a straight-jacket and the slip-cords they have round his ankles, ready to draw together at any moment. The constant bleeding resorted to in — Asylum has reduced him to what you have seen; but heaven help us all if he should have a bad fit on board!" Then seeing my face of alarm, she added, "But my hope is that Dr. C—— was right in predicting wonderful effects from the sea air: he got willingly into the boat; he came willingly on board; and he has not been so calm and quiet as he was this afternoon for a long, long while. Another change for the better is, that this evening he took a biscuit from the Orderly's hand and eat it; while for two months all the little food he has taken has been forced down his throat."

At this moment our conversation was interrupted by the entrance of the steward, saying, with infinite suavity—

"The signore are requested at once to present themselves before the police, who are now in the chief saloon."

"The police!" we both exclaimed: "what for? What can they want with us?"

"The representatives of a government that is beloved and re-

spected by the nation, are always welcome," said the steward impressively.

I turned and looked at him. His face wore a placid smile, elaborately expressive, as it appeared to me, of the calmness of a conscience at peace with all the world, and I cannot account for the instinctive voice that whispered within me, "This fellow hates and abhors the government with all his heart."

We entered the chief saloon, where we found not only the captain and all the passengers, but even all the crew, down to the little cabin-boy in the crustaceous shirt, assembled before a stupid, self-important official, and four low-looking *guardie di sicurezza*.

"And these, signor captain," said the official politely, "these are all your passengers and all your crew?"

"Yes, all," said the captain, looking round, while the officer signed to two of his myrmidons to mount guard at the door, and to the other two to search the ship. "No, stay!" continued the captain, turning to the steward, "the cook—where is the new cook?"

"Ah, of course!" exclaimed the steward, with an air of amused astonishment. "Ohe! Matteo!" he shouted, opening the cabin door. "Come here! come and pay your respects to the honourable royal police. That fellow," he added, turning with a seducing smile to the officer, "has observed nothing of what has been going on; he has no head for anything but his pots and pans."

At this moment Matteo came heavily blundering down the steps, saying in a stupid, bewildered manner—

"What now? What's the matter?"

I could scarcely believe my eyes when he entered, and it appeared to me that several of the second-class passengers who had seen him in the morning were as surprised as myself, but the crew were all impassible. There was a general laugh at his uncouth appearance, in which the police-officer heartily joined. His white cap was pulled over his forehead so as nearly to conceal one eye, and his face was so begrimed with soot and dirt, that all trace of his former good-looks was gone; one hand was thrust inside a saucepan, which he was polishing with an extremely greasy-looking cloth.

"Now *all* are here?" said the police-officer, again addressing the captain.

"Si, signor, all; except the madman whom you have already visited, in charge of the carabineers."

The official now took the captain's list in his hand, and beginning with the two first-class passengers, required each one present to answer to his or her name in turn. The last name down was Matteo Gioia, the cook, to whom the officer devoted a little more time than to the others.

"You are Matteo Gioia, late cook on board H.M.S. *Firefly*?" he asked.

"Eccellenza, sì," replied the man, with a strong Neapolitan accent, which I, for one, had not noticed in the morning.

"And when did you leave the *Firefly*?"

"At six o'clock this morning, eccellenza."

"Did you come here immediately?"

"After about two hours, eccellenza. First I went on shore to leave my wages with my old father."

"And why did you leave the *Firefly*?" said the officer, who during the whole of this interrogation was constantly referring to some notes or instructions he held in his hand.

"Eccellenza, the scullion boy was impertinent; I chastised him; he complained to the signor captain, who was angry, and ordered me to leave. I had long wanted to sail with my good friend Stefano, here; I meet him in the market-place; I hear he has parted with his cook; I propose my little talents, already favourably known to him; he accepts, and here I am, at the service of eccellenza."

And Matteo made an awkward bow, very different, I thought, from the bow to me with which he had seated himself at the piano that morning.

This explanation, which struck me as being given very much with the manner of a man repeating a lesson, appeared, however, to tally with the notes held by the police-officer, for he turned away from the cook as if satisfied, and conversed with the captain until his underlings returned, reporting that they had carefully searched the vessel, when he took his leave with the air of a man conscious of having executed an important mission in a truly imposing manner.

The cabin was immediately cleared, for night was drawing on, and the passengers were all desirous of betaking themselves to their berths.

It happened that I returned to the saloon almost immediately to fetch a shawl which I had left behind, and there I beheld our solemn and sententious steward seated upon the sofa, his whole frame convulsed with violent and apparently inextinguishable laughter. I looked round for the cause of this extravagant mirth; but he was quite alone, and although he rose and endeavoured to master himself on my entrance, the effort was abortive, and he was speechless. Although greatly mystified at the man's singular behaviour, I was compelled to hold my peace upon the subject, as I did not like to talk to my unhappy companion of his evidently irrepressible mirth. I did my best to cheer her by speaking to her of her children, and encouraging her to look forward to a better future, and she was already less depressed when the Orderly appeared at the cabin-door, and softly addressing her, said—

"Sleep, signora! sleep to-night with good hope—he has drunk nearly a cup of soup, and gone to sleep as quietly as a lamb, without any opium."

"Heaven be praised!" exclaimed the poor wife, clasping her hands.

I now urged upon her the duty of taking the young soldier's advice,

and after awhile succeeded in persuading her to go to bed, where I soon had the satisfaction of seeing her fall into a deep sleep.

For my own part, however, I was still so much excited by the events of the day, that I knew it would be impossible for me to follow her example; so I went to the saloon for some newspapers the captain had brought on board with him, and had already been reading some little time, when the steward, putting his head in at the door, remarked—

“To read by night, is to gape by day.”

Considering the remark officious, I took no notice; but after about ten minutes had elapsed, he again appeared, and said, I fancied somewhat uneasily—

“The signora will do well to go to bed now; all on board are gone to bed except the signora.”

“Enough!” I said, somewhat sharply, rising to shut the door, so as to put an end to his observations.

After some little time, however, having nothing more to read, I decided to follow his advice, and got into my berth, wondering what could have induced him thus to interfere. There certainly was—on reflection I felt sure of it—something very strange and even anxious in his manner. Could he have observed some alarming symptom in the poor madman? The thought alone made my blood run cold, and I sprang hurriedly from my berth to fasten the cabin-door; but as I did so, my attention was attracted by a faint light shining outside the little window of the cabin, and my ear caught the sound of whispered voices below. Going softly to the window and hiding my face behind the curtain, I perceived that the steps were let down, and saw a boat drawing noiselessly to the side of the vessel, in which boat I perceived a figure in white making signs to some one on deck. When the boat was close alongside, I had no difficulty in recognising in this white figure our mysterious cook. He rose up, and steadyng himself against the side of the ship with one hand, offered the other to some one who was silently descending from the vessel. With great difficulty did I restrain the cry of astonishment that rose to my lips as this figure entered the boat and revealed the man's own double—another cook, equally white, equally portly, and evidently equally desirous of silence and secrecy. I rubbed my eyes in utter amazement, scarcely crediting their evidence; but as I looked more intently, during a whispered colloquy between the two, I could make out that they were “the same—with a difference.” Yes—the new-comer was a shorter, coarser, less dignified person; the one who had now entered the boat was *our* cook, the musician; no longer begrimed, dirty, or clumsy, but bright, active, and supple in every movement. He pulled off his white coat almost immediately, letting fall his linen stomach as he did so, which his double picked up with a smile and tossed to the unseen friend on deck. But the complete transformation—which caused me to wonder how I had ever fancied any resemblance

between the two men—took place where he pulled off his white cap and displayed a mass of curly hair, the bright red colour of which was distinctly visible even in the dim light shed by his accomplice's lantern on deck. He now stood revealed a singularly handsome and very distinguished-looking man of about thirty, wearing—what I felt was but another disguise—a blue check sailor's shirt and white trousers. The boatman now pulled off his sailor's jacket and handed it to the *ci-devant* cook, who put it on, while the unseen friend on deck (was it our mysterious steward?) threw down a sailor's straw hat with so good an aim, that it lighted safely upon the red curls it was intended to cover. The true cook now clambered up the side of the vessel in a heavy, lumbering sort of way, in which I recognised the original of the assumed clumsiness of his "counterfeit presentment" in the morning; and the fugitive, for such he clearly was, turned to the boatman, and taking the oars out of his hand, asked him some question which I could not hear, but which evidently had reference to the direction he was to take. The boatman, with eager gesture and outstretched hand, pointed out to him—as I fancied—some distant ship; the other nodded gaily, the two shook hands heartily in silence, the boatman sprang noiselessly up the steps, and the strange musician rowed away into the dark alone.

I returned to my berth, but I need scarcely say that it was long before I could compose myself to sleep. When at last I slept, it was a most unquiet slumber and full of uneasy dreams. I fancied that I was walking on deck in considerable terror of the madman, whom his keepers were endeavouring to restrain from attacking the passengers; the steam was getting up, but just as the boat was about to start, I was arrested by the police, and required to repeat the words of the ballad sung by the mysterious cook in the morning. It was, however, quite impossible to recall them, because the police-officer would terrify me by rapping his knuckles violently on the table. At length I became conscious that the rapping at least was a reality, and heard the voice of the steward calling to us both to get up and come to the chief saloon, for the police were again on board.

Hastily waking my companion, I threw on a cloak and opened the door.

"The police! why this is the third time to-day. What on earth can they want now?"

"This time it is the Questore in person," said the steward, with an unmistakable chuckle; but he immediately added, with portentous gravity, "The representatives of a government beloved and respected by the nation are always welcome."

On entering the saloon we beheld a repetition of the scene of the morning; except that the place of the stupid, self-important official was filled by a stern, intelligent Questore, who appeared to me to mean business. The ceremony of sending men to inspect the vessel was repeated, as soon as the captain declared we were all assembled

but this time the number of the men was doubled, and they, as well as those who remained to guard the door, were heavily armed.

When it became the turn of the new cook to answer to his name, it struck me that he thrust himself rather unnecessarily forward, and several of those present complimented him upon his clean face. The questions asked him and the answers made were as nearly as possible identical with those asked of his double before. His answers were as ready and circumstantial, his air more natural, and his Neapolitan accent far less ostentatious, but the Questore did not appear satisfied. He listened to him with a contemptuous smile, and when he had ended, turned to one of the subordinates, saying—

“Open his coat; he has a false stomach.”

“I! holy Virgin!—I, a false stomach!” exclaimed the cook, violently tearing open both coat and waistcoat, and displaying a vast expanse of very hairy chest. “What can have given eccellenza so strange an idea?”

Eccellenza, however, was not convinced until he had himself advanced and rapped somewhat loudly with his knuckles on the unmistakable flesh and blood exposed before him, causing thereby a burst of laughter from all present, which appeared to nettle him extremely.

“There is nothing to laugh at, ladies and gentlemen,” he said severely; and then turning again to his subalterns, he added, “let him wash the red colour from his hands, we shall see that they are soft and white.”

A basin was instantly produced, but no amount of washing—and the officials certainly scrubbed away most vigorously—could reveal any other than the coarse red hands of a cook in active service.

Another burst of laughter followed this experiment; when the Questore, now flushed and angry, but still with the air of a man who had reserved his sensation *coup* for the last, said—

Show me your beautiful *red curls*, Signor Matteo.”

“My red curls!” exclaimed Matteo. “Holy Virgin, my red curls!” then, dashing off his white cap, which he had until then worn, like his double, so as nearly to conceal one eye, he thrust beneath the Questore’s nose his bullet head, very scantily covered with lank shining black hair, which certainly looked as if no human power or art could ever induce it to curl for love or money.

Even the Questore collapsed at this failure, though he angrily commanded the roar of laughter which followed it to cease. But he clearly felt that he was hopelessly off the scent; and after a few words with the captain (who, as he had never seen the false Matteo other than in his blackened and begrimed condition, was probably as innocent as he appeared), and then departed, evidently in an abominable temper, and looking like a man convinced very much against his will.

Once more we all retired to rest, and immediately after the anchor

was raised, and we steamed out of the port. We had been about half an hour at sea, when an irresistible impulse came over me to see what the mysterious steward might be doing. The vessel was silent and dark, but I could not bring myself to believe that the philosopher, after achieving so signal a triumph, was already asleep. I stole cautiously to the door of his little cabin, and peeped in. It was empty and dark, but I fancied I heard sounds of smothered laughter in the chief saloon. I pushed the door a little way open, and beheld the steward seated by the side of the genuine Matteo, on the table. An empty champagne bottle lay on the floor; another, half empty, stood upon the table between them, and at the moment I looked in upon them, they were clinking their glasses joyously together, softly repeating, with intense enjoyment, the impudent toast, "*Erreca il Signor Questore!*"

The air of unrestrained, rollicking jollity of our sententious philosopher irritated me so much that, without pausing to reflect, I opened the door upon them, saying—

"It's all very well to laugh at the Questore, steward, but there were those present whom all your cleverness had not deceived; I saw this man come alongside, and I saw the Matteo of the false stomach row away."

The effect upon the two was like a thunderclap, and they gazed first at me and then at each other with faces of blank dismay. The steward, however, quickly recovered himself, and springing off the table, he fell on his knees before me, exclaiming—

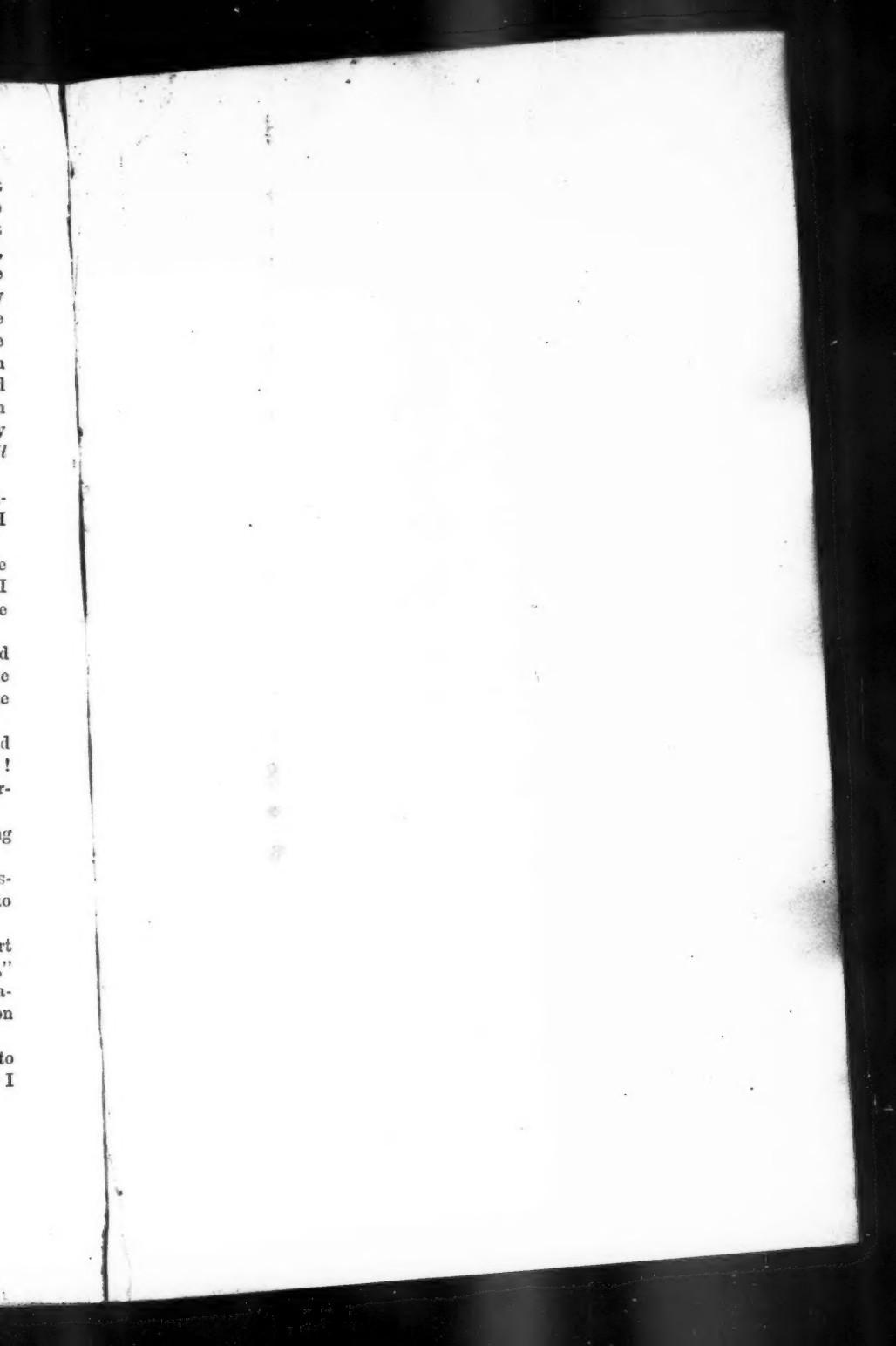
"The signora knew all, and the signora held her peace! Blessed be the good English signora, who knows when to hold her tongue! Blessed be the good English nation which always protects the unfortunate!"

And there was the imperturbable philosopher reverently kissing my hand, with the tears streaming down his cheeks!

"Enough, enough!" I said, feeling much discomposed at this display of emotion; "I did not come here to say this, I merely came to ask, what o'clock is it, steward?"

"It is nearly two hours after midnight, signora; but we left the port almost two hours behind time, on account of those accursed—" then, resuming his company manner, he said, "but the representatives of a government that is beloved and respected by the nation are always welcome."

"Nearly two hours after midnight!" thought I, as I returned to the ladies' cabin. "Well, this has been the most bewildering day I ever passed in my life, but certainly it has not been dull."





CHAPTER XXIX.

THE ELECTION.

THE day of the nomination at Percy-cross came at last, and it was manifest to everybody that there was a very unpleasant feeling in the town. It was not only that party was arrayed against party. That would have been a state of things not held to be undesirable, and at any rate would have been natural. But at present things were so divided that there was no saying which were the existing parties. Moggs was separated from Westmacott quite as absolutely as was Westmacott from the two Conservative candidates. The old Liberals of the borough were full of ridicule for poor Moggs, of whom all absurd stories were told by them both publicly and privately. But still he was there, the darling of the workmen. It was, indeed, asserted by the members of Mr. Westmacott's committee that Moggs's popularity would secure for him but very few votes. A great proportion of the working men of Percy-cross were freemen of the borough,—old voters who were on the register by right of their birth and family connection in the place, independent of householdership and rates,—and quite accustomed to the old ways of manipulation. The younger of these men might be seduced into listening to Moggs. The excitement was pleasant to them. But they were too well trained to be led away on the day of election. Moggs would give them no beer, and they had always been accustomed to their three half-crowns a head in consideration for the day's work. Not a dozen freemen of the borough would vote for Moggs. So said Mr. Kirkham, Mr. Westmacott's managing man, and no man knew the borough quite so well as did Mr. Kirkham. "They'll fight for him at the hustings," said Mr. Kirkham; "but they'll take their beer and their money, and they'll vote for us and Griffenbottom."

This might be true enough as regarded the freemen,—the men who had been, as it were, educated to political life;—but there was much doubt as to the new voters. There were about a thousand of these in the borough, and it had certainly not been the intention of either party that these men should have the half-crowns. It was from these men and their leaders,—the secretaries and chairmen and presidents,—that had come the cry for a second liberal candidate, and the consequent necessity of putting forward two Conservatives. They were equally odious to the supporters of Westmacott and of Griffenbottom. "They must have the half-crowns," Trigger had said to old Pile, the bootmaker. Pile thought that every working man was

entitled to the three half-crowns, and said as much very clearly. "I suppose old Griff ain't going to turn Hunks at this time o' day," said Mr. Pile. But the difficulties were endless, and were much better understood by Mr. Trigger than by Mr. Pile. The manner of conveying the half-crowns to the three hundred and twenty-four freemen, who would take them and vote honestly afterwards for Griffenbottom and Honeywood, was perfectly well understood. But among that godless, riotous, ungoverned and ungovernable set of new householders, there was no knowing how to act. They would take the money and then vote wrong. They would take the money and then split. The freemen were known. Three hundred and twenty-four would take Griffenbottom's beer and half-crowns. Two hundred and seventy-two would be equally complaisant with Mr. Westmacott. But of these householders nothing was known. They could not be handled. Some thirty or forty of them would probably have the turning of the election at the last hour, must then be paid at their own prices, and after that would not be safe! Mr. Trigger, in his disgust, declared that things had got into so vile a form that he didn't care if he never had anything to do with an election in Percy-cross again.

And then there was almost as much ill-feeling between the old-fashioned Griffenbottomites and the Underwooders as there was between Westmacott's Liberals and Moggs's Radicals. The two gentlemen themselves still eat their breakfasts and dinners together, and still paraded the streets of Percy-cross in each other's company. But Sir Thomas had made himself very odious even to Mr. Griffenbottom himself. He was always protesting against beer which he did see, and bribery which he did not see but did suspect. He swore that he would pay not a shilling, as to which the cause of the expenditure was not explained to him. Griffenbottom snarled at him, and expressed an opinion that Sir Thomas would of course do the same as any other gentleman. Mr. Trigger, with much dignity in his mien as he spoke, declared that the discussion of any such matter at the present moment was indecorous. Mr. Pile was for sending Sir Thomas back to town, and very strongly advocated that measure. Mr. Spicer, as to whom there was a story abroad in the borough in respect of a large order for mustard, supposed to have reached him from New York through Liverpool by the influence of Sir Thomas Underwood, thought that the borough should return the two conservative candidates. Sir Thomas might be a little indiscreet; but, upon the whole, his principles did him honour. So thought Mr. Spicer, who, perhaps, believed that the order for the mustard was coming. We need hardly say that the story, at any rate in so far as it regarded Sir Thomas Underwood, was altogether untrue. "Yes; principles!" said Mr. Pile. "I think we all know Sam Spicer's

principles. All for hisself, and nothing for a poor man. That's Sam Spicer." Of Mr. Pile, it must be acknowledged that he was not a pure-minded politician. He loved bribery in his very heart. But it is equally true that he did not want to be bribed himself. It was the old-fashioned privilege of a poor man to receive some small consideration for his vote in Percycross, and Mr. Pile could not endure to think that the poor man should be robbed of his little comforts.

In the meantime, Sir Thomas himself was in a state of great misery. From hour to hour he was fluctuating between a desire to run away from the accursed borough, and the shame of taking such a step. The desire for the seat which had brought him to Percycross had almost died out amidst the misery of his position. Among all the men of his party with whom he was associating, there was not one whom he did not dislike, and by whom he was not snubbed and contradicted. Griffenbottom, who went through his canvass under circumstances of coming gout and colicium with a courage and pertinacity that were heroic, was painfully cross to every one who was not a voter. "What's the use of all that d——d nonsense, now?" he said to Sir Thomas the evening before the nomination day. There were half-a-dozen leading Conservatives in the room, and Sir Thomas was making a final protest against bribery. He rose from his chair when so addressed, and left the room. Never in his life before had he been so insulted. Trigger followed him to his bedroom, knowing well that a quarrel at this moment would be absolutely suicidal. "It's the gout, Sir Thomas," said Mr. Trigger. "Do remember what he's going through." This was so true that Sir Thomas returned to the room. It was almost impossible not to forgive anything in a man who was suffering agonies, but could still wheedle a voter. There were three conservative doctors with Mr. Griffenbottom, each of them twice daily; and there was an opinion prevalent through the borough that the gout would be in his stomach before the election was over. Sir Thomas did return to the room, and sat himself down without saying a word. "Sir Thomas," said Mr. Griffenbottom, "a man with the gout is always allowed a little liberty."

"I admit the claim," said Sir Thomas, bowing.

"And believe me, I know this game better than you do. It's of no use saying these things. No man should ever foul his own nest. Give me a little drop more brandy, Trigger, and then I'll get myself to bed." When he was gone, they all sang Griffenbottom's praises. In staunch pluck, good humour, and manly fighting, no man was his superior. "Give and take,—the English bull-dog all over. I do like old Griffenbottom," said Spiveycomb, the paper-maker.

On the day of nomination Griffenbottom was carried up on the hustings. This carrying did him good in the borough; but it should

be acknowledged on his behalf that he did his best to walk. In the extreme agony of his attack he had to make his speech, and he made it. The hustings stood in the market-square, and straight in front of the wooden erection, standing at right angles to it, was a stout rail dividing the space for the distance of fifty or sixty yards, so that the supporters of one set of candidates might congregate on one side, and the supporters of the other candidates on the other side. In this way would the weaker part, whichever might be the weaker, be protected from the violence of the stronger. On the present occasion it seemed that the friends of Mr. Westmacott congregated with the Conservatives. Moggs's allies alone filled one side of the partition. There were a great many speeches made that day from the hustings,—thirteen in all. First the mayor, and then the four proposers and four seconds of the candidates. During these performances, though there was so much noise from the crowd below that not a word could be heard, there was no violence. When old Griffenbottom got up, supporting himself by an arm round one of the posts, he was loudly cheered from both sides. His personal popularity in the borough was undoubted, and his gout made him almost a demi-god. Nobody heard a word that he said; but then he had no desire to be heard. To be seen standing up there, a martyr to the gout, but still shouting for Percy-cross, was enough for his purpose. Sir Thomas encountered a very different reception. He was received with yells, apparently from the whole crowd. What he said was of no matter, as not a word was audible; but he did continue to inveigh against bribery. Before he had ceased a huge stone was thrown at him, and hit him heavily on the arm. He continued speaking, however, and did not himself know till afterwards that his arm was broken between the shoulder and the elbow. Mr. Westmacott was very short and good-humoured. He intended to be funny about poor Moggs;—and perhaps was funny. But his fun was of no avail. The Moggite crowd had determined that no men should be heard till their own candidate should open his mouth.

At last Ontario's turn had come. At first the roar from the crowd was so great that it seemed that it was to be with him as it had been with the others. But by degrees, though there was still a roar,—as of the sea,—Moggs's words became audible. The voices of assent and dissent are very different, even though they be equally loud. Men desirous of interrupting, do interrupt. But cheers, though they be continuous and loud as thunder, are compatible with a hearing. Moggs by this time, too, had learned to pitch his voice for an out-of-door multitude. He preached his sermon, his old sermon, about the Rights of Labour and the Salt of the Earth, the Tyranny of Capital and the Majesty of the Workmen, with an enthusiasm that made him for the moment supremely happy. He was certainly the hero of the hour in Percy-cross, and he allowed himself to believe,—just for that

hour,—that he was about to become the hero of a new doctrine throughout England. He spoke for over half an hour, while poor Griffenbottom, seated in a chair that had been brought to him, was suffering almost the pains of hell. During this speech Sir Thomas, who had also suffered greatly, but had at first endeavoured to conceal that he was suffering, discovered the extent of his misfortune, and allowed himself to be taken out from the hustings to his inn. There was an effort made to induce Mr. Griffenbottom to retire at the same time ; but Mr. Griffenbottom, not quite understanding the extent of his colleague's misfortune, and thinking that it became him to remain and to endure, was obdurate, and would not be moved. He did not care for stones or threats,—did not care even for the gout. That was his place till after the show of hands, and there he would remain. The populace, seeing this commotion on the hustings, began to fear that there was an intention to stop the oratory of their popular candidate, and called loudly upon Moggs to go on. Moggs did go on,—and was happy.

At last there came the show of hands. It was declared to be in favour of Moggs and Westmacott. That it was very much in favour of Moggs,—in favour of Moggs by five to one, there was no doubt. Among the other candidates there was not perhaps much to choose. A poll was, of course, demanded for the two Conservatives ; and then the mayor, complimenting the people on their good behaviour,—in spite of poor Sir Thomas's broken arm,—begged them to go away. That was all very well. Of course they would go away ; but not till they had driven their enemies from the field. In half a minute the dividing rail,—the rail that had divided the blue from the yellow,—was down, and all those who had dared to show themselves there as supporters of Griffenbottom and Underwood were driven ignominiously from the market-place. They fled at all corners, and in a few seconds not a streak of blue ribbon was to be seen in the square. "They'll elect that fellow Moggs to-morrow," said Mr. Westmacott to Kirkham.

"No a bit of it," said Kirkham. "I could spot all the ringleaders in the row. Nine or ten of them are Griffenbottom's old men. They take his money regularly,—get something nearly every year, join the rads at the nomination, and vote for the squire at the poll. The chaps who hollow and throw stones always vote t'other side up."

Mr. Griffenbottom kept his seat till he could be carried home in safety through the town, and was then put to bed. The three conservative doctors, who had all been setting Sir Thomas's arm, sat in consultation upon their old friend ; and it was acknowledged on every side that Mr. Griffenbottom was very ill indeed. All manner of rumours went through the town that night. Some believed that both Griffenbottom and Sir Thomas were dead,—and that the mayor had

now no choice but to declare Moggs and Westmacott elected. Then there arose a suspicion that the polls would be kept open on the morrow on behalf of two defunct candidates, so that a further election on behalf of the conservative party might be ensured. Men swore that they would break into the bedrooms of the Standard Inn, in order that they might satisfy themselves whether the two gentlemen were alive or dead. And so the town was in a hubbub.

On that evening Moggs was called upon again to address his friends at the Mechanics' Institute, and to listen to the speeches of all the presidents and secretaries and chairmen; but by ten o'clock he was alone in his bedroom at the Cordwainers' Arms. Downstairs men were shouting, singing, and drinking,—shouting in his honour, though not drinking at his expense. He was alone in his little comfortless room, but felt it to be impossible that he should lie down and rest. His heart was swelling with the emotions of the day, and his mind was full of his coming triumph. It was black night, and there was a soft drizzling rain;—but it was absolutely necessary for his condition that he should go out. It seemed to him that his very bosom would burst, if he confined himself in that narrow space. His thoughts were too big for so small a closet. He crept downstairs and out, through the narrow passage, into the night. Then, by the light of the solitary lamp that stood before the door of the public-house, he could still see those glorious words, “Moggs, Purity, and the Rights of Labour.” Noble words, which had sufficed to bind to him the whole population of that generous-hearted borough! Purity and the Rights of Labour! Might it not be that with that cry, well cried, he might move the very world! As he walked the streets of the town he felt a great love for the borough grow within his bosom. What would he not owe to the dear place which had first recognised his worth, and had enabled him thus early in life to seize hold of those ploughshares which it would be his destiny to hold for all his coming years? He had before him a career such as had graced the lives of the men whom he had most loved and admired,—of men who had dared to be independent, patriotic, and philanthropical, through all the temptations of political life. Would he be too vain if he thought to rival a Hume or a Cobden? Conceit, he said to himself, will seek to justify itself. Who can rise but those who believe their wings strong enough for soaring? There might be shipwreck of course,—but he believed that he now saw his way. As to the difficulty of speaking in public,—that he had altogether overcome. Some further education as to facts, historical and political, might be necessary. That he acknowledged to himself;—but he would not spare himself in his efforts to acquire such education. He went pacing through the damp, muddy, dark streets, making speeches that were deliciously eloquent to his own ears. That night he was certainly

the happiest man in Percycross, never doubting his success on the morrow,—not questioning that. Had not the whole town greeted him with loudest acclamation as their chosen member? He was deliciously happy;—while poor Sir Thomas was suffering the double pain of his broken arm and his dissipated hopes, and Griffenbottom was lying in his bed, with a doctor on one side and a nurse on the other, hardly able to restrain himself from cursing all the world in his agony.

At a little after eleven a tall man, buttoned up to his chin in an old great coat, called at the Percy Standard, and asked after the health of Mr. Griffenbottom and Sir Thomas. "They ain't neither of them very well then," replied the waiter. "Will you say that Mr. Moggs called to inquire, with his compliments," said the tall man. The respect shown to him was immediately visible. Even the waiter at the Percy Standard acknowledged that for that day Mr. Moggs must be treated as a great man in Percycross. After that Moggs walked home and crept into bed;—but it may be doubted whether he slept a wink that night.

And then there came the real day,—the day of the election. It was a foul, rainy, muddy, sloppy morning, without a glimmer of sun, with that thick, pervading, melancholy atmosphere which forces for the time upon imaginative men a conviction that nothing is worth anything. Griffenbottom was in bed in one room at the Percy Standard, and Underwood in the next. The three conservative doctors moving from one chamber to another, watching each other closely, and hardly leaving the hotel, had a good time of it. Mr. Trigger had already remarked that in one respect the breaking of Sir Thomas's arm was lucky, because now there would be no difficulty as to paying the doctors out of the common fund. Every half-hour the state of the poll was brought to them. Early in the morning Moggs had been in the ascendant. At half-past nine the numbers were as follows:—

Moggs	193
Westmacott	172
Griffenbottom	162
Underwood	147

At ten, and at half-past ten, Moggs was equally in advance, but Westmacott had somewhat receded. At noon the numbers were considerably altered, and were as follows:—

Griffenbottom	892
Moggs	777
Westmacott	752
Underwood	678

These at least were the numbers as they came from the conservative

books. Westmacott was placed nearer to Moggs by his own tellers. For Moggs no special books were kept. He was content to abide by the official counting.

Griffenbottom was consulted privately by Trigger and Mr. Spiveycomb as to what steps should be taken in this emergency. It was suggested in a whisper that Underwood should be thrown over altogether. There would be no beating Moggs,—so thought Mr. Spiveycomb,—and unless an effort were made it might be possible that Westmacott would creep up. Trigger in his heart considered that it would be impossible to get enough men at three half-crowns a piece to bring Sir Thomas up to a winning condition. But Griffenbottom, now that the fight was forward, was unwilling to give way a foot. "We haven't polled half the voters," said he.

"More than half what we shall poll," answered Trigger.

"They always hang back," growled Griffenbottom. "Fight it out. I don't believe they'll ever elect a shoemaker here." The order was given, and it was fought out.

Moggs, early in the morning, had been radiant with triumph, when he saw his name at the head of the lists displayed from the two inimical committee rooms. As he walked the streets, with a chairman on one side of him and a president on the other, it seemed as though his feet almost disdained to touch the mud. These were two happy hours, during which he did not allow himself to doubt of his triumph. When the presidents and the chairmen spoke to him, he could hardly answer them, so rapt was he in contemplation of his coming greatness. His very soul was full of his seat in Parliament! But when Griffenbottom approached him on the lists, and then passed him, there came a shadow upon his brow. He still felt sure of his election, but he would lose that grand place at the top of the poll to which he had taught himself to look so proudly. Soon after noon a cruel speech was made to him. "We've about pumped our side dry," said a secretary of a Young Men's Association.

"Do you mean we've polled all our friends?" asked Moggs.

"Pretty nearly, Mr. Moggs. You see our men have nothing to wait for, and they came up early." Then Ontario's heart sank within him, and he began to think of the shop in Bond Street.

The work of that afternoon in Percyross proved how correct Mr. Griffenbottom had been in his judgment. He kept his place at the top of the poll. It was soon evident that that could not be shaken. Then Westmacott passed by Moggs, and in the next half-hour Sir Thomas did so also. This was at two, when Ontario betook himself to the privacy of his bedroom at the Cordwainers' Arms. His pluck left him altogether, and he found himself unable to face the town as a losing candidate. Then for two hours there was a terrible struggle between Westmacott and Underwood, during

which things were done in the desperation of the moment, as to which it might be so difficult to give an account, should any subsequent account be required. We all know how hard it is to sacrifice the power of winning, when during the heat of the contest the power of winning is within our reach. At four o'clock the state of the poll was as follows :—

Griffenbottom	1402
Underwood	1007
Westmacott	984
Moggs	821

When the chairmen and presidents waited upon Moggs, telling him of the final result, and informing him that he must come to the hustings and make a speech, they endeavoured to console him by an assurance that he, and he alone, had fought the fight fairly. "They'll both be unseated, you know, as sure as eggs," said the president. "It can't be otherwise. They've been busy up in a little room in Petticoat Court all the afternoon, and the men have been getting as much as fifteen shillings a head!" Moggs was not consoled, but he did make his speech. It was poor and vapid ;—but still there was just enough of manhood left in him for that. As soon as his speech had been spoken he escaped up to London by the night mail train. Westmacott also spoke ; but announcement was made on behalf of the members of the borough that they were, both of them, in their beds.

CHAPTER XXX.

"MISS MARY IS IN LUCK."

THE election took place on a Tuesday,—Tuesday, the 17th of October. On the following day one of the members received a visit in his bedroom at the Percy Standard which was very pleasant to him. His daughter Patience had come down to nurse Sir Thomas and take him back to Fulham. Sir Thomas had refused to allow any message to be sent home on the day on which the accident had occurred. On the following morning he had telegraphed to say that his arm had been broken, but that he was doing very well. And on the Wednesday Patience was with him.

In spite of the broken arm it was a pleasant meeting. For the last fortnight Sir Thomas had not only not seen a human being with whom he could sympathise, but had been constrained to associate with people who were detestable to him. His horror of Griffen-bottom, his disgust at Trigger, his fear of Mr. Pabsby's explanations,

and his inability to cope with Messrs. Spicer and Roodylands when they spoke of mustard and boots, had been almost too much for him. The partial seclusion occasioned by his broken arm had been a godsend to him. In such a state he was prepared to feel that his daughter's presence was an angel's visit. And even to him his success had something of the pleasure of a triumph. Of course he was pleased to have won the seat. And though whispers of threats as to a petition had already reached him, he was able in these, the first hours of his membership, to throw his fears on that head behind him. The man must be of a most cold temperament who, under such circumstances, cannot allow himself some short enjoyment of his new toy. It was his at least for the time, and he probably told himself that threatened folk lived long. That Patience should take glory in the victory was a matter of course. "Dear papa," she said, "if you can only get your arm well again!"

"I don't suppose there is any cause for fear as to that."

"But a broken arm is a great misfortune," said Patience.

"Well;—yes. One can't deny that. And three Percycross doctors are three more misfortunes. I must get home as soon as I can."

"You mustn't be rash, papa, even to escape from Percycross. But, oh, papa; we are so happy and so proud. It is such an excellent thing that you should be in Parliament again."

"I don't know that, my dear."

"We feel it so,—Clary and I,—and so does Mary. I can't tell you the sort of anxiety we were in all day yesterday. First we got the telegram about your arm,—and then Stemm came down at eight and told us that you were returned. Stemm was quite humane on the occasion."

"Poor Stemm!—I don't know what he'll have to do."

"It won't matter to him, papa;—will it? And then he told me another piece of news."

"What is it?"

"You won't like it, papa. We didn't like it at all."

"What is it, my dear?"

"Stemm says that Ralph has sold all the Newton Priory estate to his uncle."

"It is the best thing he could do."

"Really, papa?"

"I think so. He must have done that or made some disreputable marriage."

"I don't think he would have done that," said Patience.

"But he was going to do it. He had half-engaged himself to some tailor's daughter. Indeed, up to the moment of your telling me this I thought he would marry her." Poor Clary! So Patience said to herself as she heard this. "He had got himself into such a mess

that the best thing he could do was to sell his interest to his uncle. The estate will go to a better fellow, though out of the proper line."

Then Patience told her father that she had brought a letter for him which had been given to her that morning by Stemm, who had met her at the station.

"I think," she said, "that it comes from some of the Newton family because of the crest and the Basingstoke postmark." Then the letter was brought ;—and as it concerns much the thread of our story, it shall be given to the reader ;—

"Newton Priory, October 17, 186—.

"MY DEAR SIR THOMAS UNDERWOOD,—

"I write to you with the sanction, or rather at the instigation, of my father to ask your permission to become a suitor to your niece, Miss Bonner. You will probably have heard, or at least will hear, that my father has made arrangements with his nephew Ralph, by which the reversion of the Newton property will belong to my father. It is his intention to leave the estate to me, and he permits me to tell you that he will consent to any such settlement in the case of my marriage, as would have been usual, had I been his legitimate heir. I think it best to be frank about this, as I should not have ventured to propose such a marriage either to you or to Miss Bonner, had not my father's solicitude succeeded in placing me in circumstances which may, perhaps, be regarded as in part compensating the great misfortune of my birth.

"It may probably be right that I should add that I have said no word on this subject to Miss Bonner. I have hitherto felt myself constrained by the circumstances to which I have alluded from acting as other men may act. Should you be unwilling to concede that the advantages of fortune which have now fallen in my way justify me in proposing to myself such a marriage, I hope that you will at least excuse my application to yourself.

"Very faithfully yours,

"RALPH NEWTON."

Sir Thomas read the letter twice before he spoke a word to his daughter. Then, after pausing with it for a moment in his hand, he threw it to her across the bed. "Miss Mary is in luck," he said :—"in very great luck. It is a magnificent property, and as far as I can see, one of the finest young fellows I ever met. You understand about his birth?"

"Yes," said Patience, almost in a whisper.

"It might be a hindrance to him in some circumstances; but not here. It is nothing here. Did you know of this?"

"No, indeed."

"Nor Mary?"

"It will be quite a surprise to her. I am sure it will."

"You think, then, that there has been nothing said,—not a word about it?"

"I am sure there has not, papa. Clarissa had some joke with Mary,—quite as a joke."

"Then there has been a joke?"

"It meant nothing. And as for Mr. Newton, he could not have dreamed of anything of the kind. We all liked him."

"So did I. The property will be much better with him than with the other. Mary is a very lucky girl. That's all I can say. As for the letter, it's the best letter I ever read in my life."

There was some delay before Sir Thomas could write an answer to young Newton. It was, indeed, his left arm that had suffered; but even with so much of power abstracted, writing is not an easy task. And this was a letter the answering of which could not be deputed to any secretary. On the third day after its receipt Sir Thomas did manage with much difficulty to get a reply written.

"DEAR MR. NEWTON,—

"I have had my left arm broken in the election here. Hence the delay. I can have no objection. Your letter does you infinite honour. I presume you know that my niece has no fortune.

"Yours, most sincerely,

"THOMAS UNDERWOOD."

"What a pity it is," said Sir Thomas, "that a man can't have a broken arm in answering all letters. I should have had to write ever so much had I been well. And yet I could not have said a word more that would have been of any use."

Sir Thomas was kept an entire week at the Percycross Standard after his election was over before the three doctors and the innkeeper between them would allow him to be moved. During this time there was very much discussion between the father and daughter as to Mary's prospects; and a word or two was said inadvertently which almost opened the father's eyes as to the state of his younger daughter's affections. It is sometimes impossible to prevent the betrayal of a confidence, when the line between betrayal and non-betrayal is finely drawn. It was a matter of course that there should be much said about that other Ralph, the one now disinherited and dispossessed, who had so long and so intimately been known to them; and it was almost impossible for Patience not to show the cause of her great grief. It might be, as her father said, that the property would be better in the hands of this other young man;

but Patience knew that her sympathies were with the spendthrift, and with the dearly-loved sister who loved the spendthrift. Since Clarissa had come to speak so openly of her love, to assert it so loudly, and to protest that nothing could or should shake it, Patience had been unable not to hope that the heir might at last prove himself worthy to be her sister's husband. Then they heard that his inheritance was sold. "It won't make the slightest difference to me," said Clary almost triumphantly, as she discussed the matter with Patience the evening before the journey to Percycross. "If he were a beggar it would be the same." To Patience, however, the news of the sale had been a great blow. And now her father told her that this young man had been thinking of marrying another girl, a tailor's daughter;—that such a marriage had been almost fixed. Surely it would be better that steps should be taken to wean her sister from such a passion! But yet she did not tell the secret. She only allowed a word to escape her, from which it might be half surmised that Clarissa would be a sufferer. "What difference will it make to Clary?" asked Sir Thomas.

"I have sometimes thought that he cared for her," said Patience cunningly. "He would hardly have been so often at the villa, unless there had been something."

"There must be nothing of that kind," said Sir Thomas. "He is a spendthrift, and quite unworthy of her. I will not have him at the villa. He must be told so. If you see anything of that kind, you must inform me. Do you understand, Patience?" Patience understood well enough, but knew not what reply to make. She could not tell her sister's secret. And if there were faults in the matter, was it not her father's fault? Why had he not lived with them, so that he might see these things with his own eyes? "There must be nothing of that kind," said Sir Thomas, with a look of anger in his eyes.

When the week was over, the innkeeper and the doctors submitting with but a bad grace, the member for Percycross returned to London with his arm bound up in a sling. The town was by this time quite tranquil. The hustings had been taken down, and the artizans of the borough were back at their labours, almost forgetting Moggs and his great doctrines. That there was to be a petition was a matter of course. It was at least a matter of course that there should be threats of a petition. The threat of course reached Sir Thomas's ears, but nothing further was said to him. When he and his daughter went down to the station in the Standard fly, it almost seemed that he was no more to the borough than any other man might be with a broken arm. "I shall not speak of this to Mary," he said on his journey home. "Nor should you, I think, my dear."

"Of course not, papa."

"He should have the opportunity of changing his mind after receiving my letter, if he so pleases. For her sake I hope he will not." Patience said nothing further. She loved her cousin Mary, and certainly had felt no dislike for this fortunate young man. But she could not so quickly bring herself to sympathise with interests which seemed to be opposed to those of her sister.

CHAPTER XXXI.

IT IS ALL SETTLED.

IN the last half of this month of October the Squire at Newton was very pressing on his lawyers up in London to settle the affairs of the property. He was most anxious to make a new will, but could not do so till his nephew had completed the sale, and till the money had been paid. He had expressed a desire to go up to London and remain there till all was done; but against this his son had expostulated, urging that his father could not hasten the work up in London by his presence, but would certainly annoy and flurry everybody in the lawyer's office. Mr. Carey had promised that the thing should be done with as little delay as possible, but Mr. Carey was not a man to be driven. Then again the Squire would be a miserable man up in London, whereas at the Priory he might be so happy among the new works which he had already inaugurated. The son's arguments prevailed,—especially that argument as to the pleasure of the Squire's present occupations,—and the Squire consented to remain at home.

There seemed to be an infinity of things to be done, and to the Squire himself the world appeared to require more of happy activity than at any previous time of his life. He got up early, and was out about the place before breakfast. He had endless instructions to give to everybody about the estate. The very air of the place was sweeter to him than heretofore. The labourers were less melancholy at their work. The farmers smiled oftener. The women and children were more dear to him. Everything around him had now been gifted with the grace of established ownership. His nephew Gregory, after that last dinner of which mention was made, hardly came near him during the next fortnight. Once or twice the Squire went up to the church during week days that he might catch the parson, and even called at the parsonage. But Gregory was unhappy, and would not conceal his unhappiness. "I suppose it will wear off," said the Squire to his son.

"Of course it will, sir."

"It shall not be my fault if it does not. I wonder whether it would have made him happier to see the property parcelled out and sold to the highest bidder after my death."

"It is not unnatural, if you think of it," said Ralph.

"Perhaps not; and God forbid that I should be angry with him because he cannot share my triumph. I feel, however, that I have done my duty, and that nobody has a right to quarrel with me."

And then there were the hunters. Every sportsman knows, and the wives and daughters of all sportsmen know, how important a month in the calendar is the month of October. The real campaign begins in November; and even for those who do not personally attend to the earlier work of the kennel,—or look after cub-hunting, which during the last ten days of October is apt to take the shape of genuine hunting,—October has charms of its own and peculiar duties. It is the busiest month in the year in regard to horses. Is physic needed? In the Squire's stables physic was much eschewed, and the Squire's horses were usually in good condition. But it is needful to know, down to a single line on the form, whether this or that animal wants more exercise,—and if so, of what nature. We hold that for hunters which are worked regularly throughout the season, and which live in loose boxes summer and winter, but little exercise is required except in the months of September and October. Let them have been fed on oats throughout the year, and a good groom will bring them into form in two months. Such at least was the order at the Newton stables; and during this autumn,—especially during these last days of October,—this order was obeyed with infinite alacrity, and with many preparations for coming joys. And there are other cares, less onerous indeed, but still needful. What good sportsman is too proud, or even too much engaged, to inspect his horse's gear,—and his own? Only let his horses' gear stand first in his mind! Let him be sure that the fit of a saddle is of more moment than the fit of a pair of breeches;—that in riding the length, strength, and nature of the bit will avail more,—should at least avail more,—than the depth, form, and general arrangement of the flask; that the question of boots, great as it certainly is, should be postponed to the question of shoes; that a man's seat should be guarded by his girths rather than by his spurs; that no run has ever been secured by the brilliancy of the cravat, though many a run has been lost by the insufficiency of a stirrup-leather. In the stables and saddle-room, and throughout the whole establishment of the house at Newton, all these matters were ever sedulously regarded; but they had never been regarded with more joyful zeal than was given to them during this happy month. There was not a stable-boy about the place who did not know and feel that their Mr. Ralph was now to take his place in the hunting-field as the heir to Newton Priory.

And there were other duties at Newton of which the crowd of riding-men know little or nothing. Were there foxes in the coverts? The Squire had all his life been a staunch preserver, thinking more of a vixen with her young cubs than he would of any lady in the land with her first-born son. During the last spring and summer, however, things had made him uncomfortable; and he had not personally inquired after the well-being of each nursery in the woods as had been his wont. Ralph, indeed, had been on the alert, and the keepers had not become slack;—but there had been a whisper about the place that the master didn't care so much about the foxes as he used to do. They soon found out that he cared enough now. The head-keeper opened his eyes very wide when he was told that the Squire would take it as a personal offence if the coverts were ever drawn blank. It was to be understood through the county that at Newton Priory everything now was happy and prosperous. "We'll get up a breakfast and a meet on the lawn before the end of the month," said the Squire to his son. "I hate hunt breakfasts myself, but the farmers like them." From all which the reader will perceive that the Squire was in earnest.

Ralph hunted all through the latter days of October, but the Squire himself would not go out till the first regular day of the season. "I like a law, and I like to stick to it," he said. "Five months is enough for the horses in all conscience." At last the happy day arrived,—Wednesday, the 2nd of November,—and the father and son started together for the meet in a dog-cart on four wheels with two horses. On such occasions the Squire always drove himself, and professed to go no more than eight miles an hour. The meet was over in the Berkshire county in the neighbourhood of Swallowfield, about twelve miles distant, and the Squire was in his seat precisely at half-past nine. Four horses had gone on in the charge of two grooms, for the Squire had insisted on Ralph riding with a second horse. "If you don't, I won't," he had said; and Ralph of course had yielded. Just at this time there had grown up in the young man's mind a feeling that his father was almost excessive in the exuberance of his joy,—that he was displaying too ostensibly to the world at large the triumph which he had effected. But the checking of this elation was almost impossible to the son on whose behalf it was exhibited. Therefore, to Ralph's own regret, the two horses had on this morning been sent on to Barford Heath. The Squire was not kept waiting a moment. Ralph lit his cigar and jumped in, and the Squire started in all comfort and joy. The road led them by Darvell's farm, and for a moment the carriage was stopped that a word might be spoken to some workman. "You'd better have a couple more men, Miles. It won't do to let the frost catch us," said the Squire. Miles touched his hat, and assented. "The house will

look very well from here," said the Squire, pointing down through a line of trees. Ralph assented cheerily; and yet he thought that his father was spending more money than Darvell's house need to have cost him.

They reached Barford Heath a few minutes before eleven, and there was a little scene upon the occasion. It was the first recognised meet of the season, and the Squire had not been out before. It was now known to almost every man there that the owner of Newton Priory had at last succeeded in obtaining the reversion of the estate for his own son; and though the matter was one which hardly admitted of open congratulation, still there were words spoken and looks given, and a little additional pressure in the shaking of hands,—all of which seemed to mark a triumph. That other Ralph had not been known in the county. This Ralph was very popular; and though of course there was existent some amount of inner unexpressed feeling that the proper line of an old family was being broken, that for the moment was kept in abeyance, and all men's faces wore smiles as they were turned upon the happy Squire. He hardly carried himself with as perfect a moderation as his son would have wished. He was a little loud,—not saying much to any one openly about the property, uttering merely a word or two in a low voice in answer to the kind expressions of one or two specially intimate friends; but in discussing other matters,—the appearance of the pack, the prospects of the season, the state of the county,—he was not quite like himself. In his ordinary way he was a quiet man, not often heard at much distance, and contented to be noted as Newton of Newton rather than as a man commanding attention by his conduct before other men. There certainly was a difference to-day, and it was of that kind which wine produces on some who are not habitual drinkers. The gases of his life were in exuberance, and he was as a balloon insufficiently freighted with ballast. His buoyancy, unless checked, might carry him too high among the clouds. All this Ralph saw, and kept himself a little aloof. If there were aught amiss, there was no help for it on his part; and, after all, what was amiss was so very little amiss.

"We'll draw the small gorses first," said the old master, addressing himself specially to Mr. Newton, "and then we'll go into Barford Wood."

"Just so," said the Squire; "the gorses first by all means. I remember when there was always a fox at Barford Gorse. Come along. I hate to see time wasted. You'll be glad to hear we're full of foxes at Newton. There were two litters bred in Bostock Spring; —two, by Jove! in that little place. Dan,"—Dan was his second horseman,—"I'll ride the young one this morning. You have Paddy-whack fresh for me about one." Paddywhack was the old Irish

horse which had carried him so long, and has been mentioned before. There was nothing remarkable in all this. There was no word spoken that might not have been said with a good grace by any old sportsman, who knew the men around him, and who had long preserved foxes for their use ;—but still it was felt that the Squire was a little loud. Ralph the son, on whose behalf all this triumph was felt, was silenter than usual, and trotted along at the rear of the long line of horsemen.

One specially intimate friend of his,—a man whom he really loved,—hung back with the object of congratulating him. “Ralph,” said George Morris, of Watheby Grove, a place about four miles from the Priory, “I must tell you how glad I am of all this.”

“All right, old fellow.”

“Come; you might show out a little to me. Isn’t it grand? We shall always have you among us now. Don’t tell me that you are indifferent.”

“I think enough about it, God knows, George. But it seems to me that the less said about it the better. My father has behaved nobly to me, and of course I like to feel that I’ve got a place in the world marked out for me. But—”

“But what?”

“You understand it all, George. There shouldn’t be rejoicing in a family because the heir has lost his inheritance.”

“I can’t look at it in that line.”

“I can’t look at it in any other,” said Ralph. “Mind you, I’m not saying that it isn’t all right. What has happened to him has come of his own doings. I only mean that we ought to be quiet about it. My father’s spirits are so high, that he can hardly control them.”

“By George, I don’t wonder at it,” said George Morris.

There were three little bits of gorse about half-a-mile from Barford Wood, as to which it seemed that expectation did not run high, but from the last of which an old fox broke before the hounds were in it. It was so sudden a thing that the pack was on the scent and away before half-a-dozen men had seen what had happened. Our Squire had been riding with Cox, the huntsman, who had ventured to say how happy he was that the young squire was to be the Squire some day. “So am I, Cox; so am I,” said the Squire. “And I hope he’ll be a friend to you for many a year.”

“By the holy, there’s Dick a-hallooing,” said Cox, forgetting at once the comparatively unimportant affairs of Newton Priory in the breaking of this unexpected fox. “Golly;—if he ain’t away, Squire.” The hounds had gone at once to the whip’s voice, and were in full cry in less time than it has taken to tell the story of “the find.” Cox was with them, and so was the Squire. There were two or three

others, and one of the whips. The start, indeed, was not much, but the burst was so sharp, and the old fox ran so straight, that it sufficed to enable those who had got the lead to keep it. "Tally-ho!" shouted the Squire, as he saw the animal making across a stubble field before the hounds, with only one fence between him and the quarry. "Tally-ho!" It was remarked afterwards that the Squire had never been known to halloo to a fox in that way before. "Just like one of the young 'uns, or a fellow out of the town," said Cox, when expressing his astonishment.

But the Squire never rode a run better in his life. He gave a lead to the field, and he kept it. "I wouldn't 'a spoilt him by putting my nose afore 'is, were it ever so," said Cox afterwards. "He went as straight as a schoolboy at Christmas, and the young horse he rode never made a mistake. Let men say what they will, a young horse will carry a man a brush like that better than an old one. It was very short. They had run their fox, pulled him down, broken him up, and eaten him within half an hour. Jack Graham, who is particular about those things, and who was, at any rate, near enough to see it all, said that it was exactly twenty-two minutes and a half. He might be right enough in that, but when he swore that they had gone over four miles of ground, he was certainly wrong. They killed within a field of Heckfield church, and Heckfield church can't be four miles from Barford Gorse. That they went as straight as a line everybody knew. Besides, they couldn't have covered the ground in the time. The pace was good, no doubt; but Jacky Graham is always given to exaggeration."

The Squire was very proud of his performance, and, when Ralph came up, was loud in praise of the young horse. "Never was carried so well in my life,—never," said he. "I knew he was good, but I didn't know he would jump like that. I wouldn't take a couple of hundred for him." This was still a little loud; but the Squire at this moment had the sense of double triumph within, and was to be forgiven. It was admitted on all sides that he had ridden the run uncommonly well. "Just like a young man, by Jove," said Jack Graham. "Like what sort of a young man?" asked George Harris, who had come up at the heel of the hunt with Ralph.

"And where were you, Master Ralph?" said the Squire to his son.

"I fancy I just began to know they were running by the time you were killing your fox," said Ralph.

"You should have your eyes better about you, my boy; shouldn't he, Cox?"

"The young squire ain't often in the wrong box," said the huntsman.

"He wasn't in the right one to-day," said the Squire. This was still a little loud. There was too much of that buoyancy which

might have come from drink ; but which, with the Squire, was the effect of that success for which he had been longing rather than hoping all his life.

From Heckfield they trotted back to Barford Wood, the master resolving that he would draw his country in the manner he had proposed to himself in the morning. There was some little repining at this, partly because the distance was long, and partly because Barford Woods were too large to be popular. "Hunting is over for the day," said Jack Graham. To this view of the case the Squire, who had now changed his horse, objected greatly. "We shall find in Barford big wood as sure as the sun rises," said he. "Yes," said Jack, "and run into the little wood and back to the big wood, and so on till we hate every foot of the ground. I never knew anything from Barford Woods yet for which a donkey wasn't as good as a horse." The Squire again objected, and told the story of a run from Barford Woods twenty years ago which had taken them pretty nearly on to Ascot Heath. "Things have changed since that," said Jack Graham. "Very much for the better," said the Squire. Ralph was with him then, and still felt that his father was too loud. Whether he meant that hunting was better now than in the old days twenty years ago, or that things as regarded the Newton estate were better, was not explained ; but all who heard him speak imagined that he was alluding to the latter subject.

Drawing Barford Woods is a very different thing than drawing Barford Gorses. Anybody may see a fox found at the gorses who will simply take the trouble to be with the hounds when they go into the covert ; but in the wood it becomes a great question with a sportsman whether he will stick to the pack or save his horse and loiter about till he hears that a fox has been found. The latter is certainly the commoner course, and perhaps the wiser. And even when the fox has been found it may be better for the expectant sportsman to loiter about till he breaks, giving some little attention to the part of the wood in which the work of hunting may be progressing. There are those who systematically stand still or roam about very slowly ;—others, again, who ride and cease riding by spurts, just as they become weary or impatient ;—and others who, with dogged perseverance, stick always to the track of the hounds. For years past the Squire was to have been found among the former and more prudent set of riders, but on this occasion he went gallantly through the thickest of the underwood, close at the huntsman's heels. "You'll find it rather nasty, Mr. Newton, among them brakes," Cox had said to him. But the Squire had answered that he hadn't got his Sunday face on, and had persevered.

They were soon on a fox in Barford Wood ;—but being on a fox in Barford Wood was very different from finding a fox in Barford Gorse.

Out of the gorse a fox must go ; but in the big woods he might choose to remain half the day. And then the chances were that he would either beat the hounds at last, or else be eaten in covert. "It's a very pretty place to ride about and smoke and drink one's friend's sherry." That was Jack Graham's idea of hunting in Barford Woods, and a great deal of that kind of thing was going on to-day. Now and then there was a little excitement, and cries of "away" were heard. Men would burst out of the wood here and there, ride about for a few minutes, and then go in again. Cox swore that they had thrice changed their fox, and was beginning to be a little short in his temper; the whips' horses were becoming jaded, and the master had once or twice answered very crossly when questioned. "How the devil do you suppose I'm to know," he had said to a young gentleman who had inquired, "where they were?" But still the Squire kept on zealously, and reminded Ralph that some of the best things of the season were often lost by men becoming slack towards evening. At that time it was nearly four o'clock, and Cox was clearly of opinion that he couldn't kill a fox in Barford Woods that day.

But still the hounds were hunting. "Darned if they ain't back to the little wood again," said Cox to the Squire. They were at that moment in an extreme corner of an outlying copse, and between them and Barford Little Wood was a narrow strip of meadow, over which they had passed half-a-dozen times that day. Between the copse and the meadow there ran a broad ditch with a hedge,—a rotten made-up fence of sticks and bushes, which at the corner had been broken down by the constant passing of horses, till, at this hour of the day, there was hardly at that spot anything of a fence to be jumped. "We must cross with them again, Cox," said the Squire. At that moment he was nearest to the gap, and close to him were Ralph and George Morris, as well as the huntsman. But Mr. Newton's horse was standing sideways to the hedge, and was not facing the passage. He, nevertheless, prepared to pass it first, and turned his horse sharply at it ; as he did so, some bush or stick caught the animal in the flank, and he, in order to escape the impediment, clambered up the bank sideways, not taking the gap, and then balanced himself to make his jump over the ditch. But he was entangled among the sticks and thorns and was on broken ground, and jumping short, came down into the ditch. The Squire fell heavily head-long on to the field, and the horse, with no further effort of his own, but unable to restrain himself, rolled over his master. It was a place as to which any horseman would say that a child might ride through if on a donkey without a chance of danger, and yet the three men who saw it knew at once that the Squire had had a bad fall. Ralph was first through the gap, and was off his own horse as the old Irish hunter, with a groan, collected himself and got upon his legs. In rising,

the animal was very careful not to strike his late rider with his feet; but it was too evident to Cox that the beast in his attempt to rise had given a terrible squeeze to the prostrate Squire with his saddle.

In a moment the three men were on their knees, and it was clear that Mr. Newton was insensible. "I'm afraid he's hurt," said Morris. Cox merely shook his head, as he gently attempted to raise the Squire's shoulder against his own. Ralph, as pale as death, held his father's hand in one of his own, and with the other endeavoured to feel the pulse of the heart. Presently, before any one else came up to them, a few drops of blood came from between the sufferer's lips. Cox again shook his head. "We'd better get him on to a gate, Mr. Ralph, and into a house," said the huntsman. They were quickly surrounded by others, and the gate was soon there, and within twenty minutes a surgeon was standing over our poor old friend. "No; he wasn't dead," the surgeon said; "but _____. " "What is it?" asked Ralph, impetuously. The surgeon took the master of the hunt aside and whispered into his ear that Mr. Newton was a dead man. His spine had been so injured by the severity of his own fall, and by the weight of the horse rolling on him while he was still doubled up on the ground, that it was impossible that he should ever speak again. So the surgeon said, and Squire Newton never did speak again.

He was carried home to the house of a gentleman who lived in those parts, in order that he might be saved the longer journey to the Priory;—but the length of the road mattered but little to him. He never spoke again, nor was he sensible for a moment. Ralph remained with him during the night,—of course,—and so did the surgeon. At five o'clock on the following morning his last breath had been drawn, and his life had passed away from him. George Morris also had remained with them,—or rather had come back to the house after having ridden home and changed his clothes, and it was by him that the tidings were at last told to the wretched son. "It is all over, Ralph!" "I suppose so!" said Ralph, hoarsely. "There has never been a doubt," said George, "since we heard of the manner of the accident." "I suppose not," said Ralph. The young man sat silent, and composed, and made no expression of his grief. He did not weep, nor did his face even wear that look of woe which is so common to us all when grief comes to us. They two were still in the room in which the body lay, and were standing close together over the fire. Ralph was leaning on his elbow upon the chimney-piece, and from time to time Morris would press his arm. They had been standing together thus for some twenty minutes when Morris asked a question.

"The affair of the property had been settled, Ralph?"

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"RALPH THE HEIR."



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"Don't talk of that now," said the other angrily. Then, after a pause, he put up his face and spoke again. "Nothing has been settled," he said. "The estate belongs to my cousin Ralph. He should be informed at once,—at once. He should be telegraphed to, to come to Newton. Would you mind doing it? He should be informed at once."

"There is time enough for that," said George Morris.

"If you will not I must," replied Ralph.

The telegram was at once sent in duplicate, addressed to that other Ralph,—Ralph who was declared by the Squire's son to be once more Ralph the heir,—addressed to him both at his lodgings in London and at the Moonbeam. When the messenger had been sent to the nearest railway station with the message, Ralph and his friend started for Newton Priory together. Poor Ralph still wore his boots and breeches and the red coat in which he had ridden on the former fatal day, and in which he had passed the night by the side of his dying father's bed. On their journey homeward they met Gregory, who had heard of the accident, and had at once started to see his uncle.

"It is all over!" said Ralph. Gregory, who was in his gig, dropped the reins and sat in silence. "It is all done. Let us get on, George. It is horrid to me to be in this coat. Get on quickly. Yes, indeed; everything is done now."

He had lost a father who had loved him dearly, and whom he had dearly loved,—a father whose opportunities of showing his active love had been greater even than fall to the lot of most parents. A father gives naturally to his son, but the Squire had been almost unnatural in his desire to give. There had never been a more devoted father, one more intensely anxious for his son's welfare;—and Ralph had known this, and loved his father accordingly. Nevertheless, he could not keep himself from remembering that he had now lost more than a father. The estate as to which the Squire had been so full of interest,—as to which he, Ralph, had so constantly endeavoured to protect himself from an interest that should be too absorbing,—had in the last moment escaped him. And now, in this sad and solemn hour, he could not keep himself from thinking of that loss. As he had stood in the room in which the dead body of his father had been lying, he had cautioned himself against this feeling. But still he had known that it had been present to him. Let him do what he would with his own thoughts, he could not hinder them from running back to the fact that by his father's sudden death he had lost the possession of the Newton estate. He hated himself for remembering such a fact at such a time, but he could not keep himself from remembering it. His father had fought a life-long battle to make him the heir of Newton, and had perished in the moment of his victory,—but before

his victory was achieved. Ralph had borne his success well while he had thought that his success was certain; but now——! He knew that all such subjects should be absent from his mind with such cause for grief as weighed upon him at this moment,—but he could not drive away the reflection. That other Ralph Newton had won upon the post. He would endeavour to bear himself well, but he could not but remember that he had been beaten. And there was the father who had loved him so well lying dead!

When he reached the house, George Morris was still with him. Gregory, to whom he had spoken hardly a word, did not come beyond the parsonage. Ralph could not conceal from himself, could hardly conceal from his outward manner, the knowledge that Gregory must be aware that his cause had triumphed. And yet he hated himself for thinking of these things, and believed himself to be brutal in that he could not conceal his thoughts. "I'll send over for a few things, and stay with you for a day or two," said George Morris. "It would be bad that you should be left here alone." But Ralph would not permit the visit. "My father's nephew will be here to-morrow," he said, "and I would rather that he should find me alone." In thinking of it all, he remembered that he must withdraw his claims to the hand of Mary Bonner, now that he was nobody. He could have no pretension now to offer his hand to any such girl as Mary Bonner!

CHAPTER XXXII.

SIR THOMAS AT HOME.

SIR THOMAS UNDERWOOD was welcomed home at the villa with a double amount of sympathy and glory,—that due to him for his victory being added to that which came to him on the score of his broken arm. A hero is never so much a hero among women as when he has been wounded in the battle. The very weakness which throws him into female hands imparts a moiety of his greatness to the women who for the while possess him, and creates a partnership in heroism, in which the feminine half delights to make the most of its own share. During the week at Percy-cross and throughout the journey Patience had had this half all to herself; and there had arisen to her considerable enjoyment from it as soon as she found that her father would probably be none the worse for his accident after a few weeks. She saw more of him now than she had done for years, and was able, after a fashion, to work her quiet, loving, female will with him, exacting from him an obedience to feminine sway such as had not been exercised on him since his wife's death. He himself had been humbled, passive, and happy. He had taken his gruel, grumbled with modesty, and consoled himself with constantly reflecting that he was member of Parliament for the borough of Percy-cross.

During their journey, although Patience was urgent in requiring from her father quiescence, lest he should injure himself by too much exertion, there were many words spoken both as to Clorissa and Mary Bonner. As to poor Clary, Sir Thomas was very decided that if there were any truth in the suspicion which had been now roused in his mind as to Ralph the heir, the thing must be put an end to at once. Ralph who had been the heir was now in possession of that mess of pottage for which he had sold his inheritance,—so said Sir Thomas to his daughter,—and would undoubtedly consume that, as he had consumed the other mess which should have lasted him till the inheritance was his own. And he told to Patience the whole story as to Polly Neefit,—the whole story, at least, as he had heard it. Ralph had declared to Sir Thomas, when discussing the expedience of his proposed marriage with the daughter of the breeches-maker, that he was attached to Polly Neefit. Sir Thomas had done all he could to dissuade the young man from a marriage which, in his eyes, was disgraceful; but he could not bring himself to look with favour on affections transferred so quickly from the breeches-maker's

daughter to his own. There must be no question of a love affair between Clary and the foolish heir who had disinherited himself by his folly. All this was doubly painful to Patience. She suffered first for her sister, the violence of whose feelings were so well known to her, and so completely understood ; and then on her own account she was obliged to endure the conviction that she was deceiving her father. Although she had allowed something of the truth to escape from her, she had not wilfully told her sister's secret. But looking at the matter from her father's point of view, and hearing all that her father now said, she was brought in guilty of hypocrisy in the court of her own conscience.

In that other matter as to Mary Bonner there was much more of pleasantness. There could be no possible reason why that other man, to whom Fortune was going to be so good, should not marry Mary Bonner, if Mary could bring herself to take him into her good graces. And of course she would. Such at least was Sir Thomas's opinion. How was it possible that a girl like Mary, who had nothing of her own, should fail to like a lover who had everything to recommend him,—good looks, good character, good temper, and good fortune. Patience did make some protest against this, for the sake of her sex. She didn't think, she said, that Mary had ever thought of Mr. Newton in that light. "There must be a beginning to such thoughts, of course," said Sir Thomas. Patience explained that she had nothing to say against Mr. Newton. It would all be very nice and proper, no doubt,—only perhaps Mary might not care for Mr. Newton. "Psha!" said Sir Thomas. Sir Thomas seemed to think that the one girl was as much bound to fall in love as the other was to abstain from so doing. Patience continued her protest,—but very mildly, because her father's arm was in a sling. Then there arose the question whether Mary should be told of the young man's letter. Patience thought that the young man should be allowed to come and speak for himself. Sir Thomas made no objection to the young man's coming. The young man might come when he pleased. But Sir Thomas thought it would be well that Mary should know what the young man had written. And so they reached home.

To be glorified by one worshipping daughter had been pleasant to the wounded hero, but to be glorified by two daughters and a niece was almost wearisome. On the first evening nothing was said about the love troubles or love prospects of the girls. Sir Thomas permitted to himself the enjoyment of his glory, with some few signs of impatience when the admiration became too strong. He told the whole story of his election, lying back among his cushions on the sofa, although Patience, with mild persistence, cautioned him against exertion.

"It is very bad that you should have your arm broken, papa," said Clarissa.

"It is a bore, my dear."

"Of course it is,—a dreadful bore." But as it is doing so well, I am so glad that you went down to Percycross. It is such a great thing that you should be in the House again. It does give so much colour to our lives here."

"I hope they were not colourless before."

"You know what I mean. It is so nice to feel that you are in Parliament."

"It is quite on the cards that I may lose the seat by petition."

"They never can be so cruel," said Mary.

"Cruelty!" said Sir Thomas laughing. "In politics men skin each other without the slightest feeling. I do not doubt that Mr. Westmacott would ruin me with the most perfect satisfaction, if by doing so he could bring the seat within his own reach again; and yet I believe Mr. Westmacott to be a kind-hearted, good sort of man. There is a theory among Englishmen that in politics no man need spare another. To wish that your opponent should fall dead upon the hustings is not an uncharitable wish at an election."

"Oh, papa!" exclaimed Patience.

"At any rate you are elected," said Clary.

"And threatened folk live long, uncle," said Mary Bonner.

"So they say, my dear. Well, Patience, don't look at me with so much reprobation in your eyes, and I will go to bed at once. Being here instead of at the Percy Standard does make one inclined to take a liberty."

"Oh, papa, it is such a delight to have you," said Clary, jumping up and kissing her father's forehead. All this was pleasant enough, and the first evening came to an end very happily.

The next morning Patience, when she was alone with her father, made a request to him with some urgency. "Papa," she said, "do not say anything to Clary about Ralph."

"Why not?"

"If there is anything in it, let it die out of itself."

"But is there?"

"How am I to say? Think of it, papa. If I knew it, I could hardly tell,—even you."

"Why not? If I am not to hear the truth from you who is to tell me?"

"Dear papa, don't be angry. There may be a truth which had better not be told. What we both want is that Clary shouldn't suffer. If you question her she will suffer. You may be sure of this, that she will obey your wishes."

"How can she obey them, unless she knows them?"

"Don't talk of that now," said the other angrily. Then, after a pause, he put up his face and spoke again. "Nothing has been settled," he said. "The estate belongs to my cousin Ralph. He should be informed at once,—at once. He should be telegraphed to, to come to Newton. Would you mind doing it? He should be informed at once."

"There is time enough for that," said George Morris.

"If you will not I must," replied Ralph.

The telegram was at once sent in duplicate, addressed to that other Ralph,—Ralph who was declared by the Squire's son to be once more Ralph the heir,—addressed to him both at his lodgings in London and at the Moonbeam. When the messenger had been sent to the nearest railway station with the message, Ralph and his friend started for Newton Priory together. Poor Ralph still wore his boots and breeches and the red coat in which he had ridden on the former fatal day, and in which he had passed the night by the side of his dying father's bed. On their journey homeward they met Gregory, who had heard of the accident, and had at once started to see his uncle.

"It is all over!" said Ralph. Gregory, who was in his gig, dropped the reins and sat in silence. "It is all done. Let us get on, George. It is horrid to me to be in this coat. Get on quickly. Yes, indeed; everything is done now."

He had lost a father who had loved him dearly, and whom he had dearly loved,—a father whose opportunities of showing his active love had been greater even than fall to the lot of most parents. A father gives naturally to his son, but the Squire had been almost unnatural in his desire to give. There had never been a more devoted father, one more intensely anxious for his son's welfare;—and Ralph had known this, and loved his father accordingly. Nevertheless, he could not keep himself from remembering that he had now lost more than a father. The estate as to which the Squire had been so full of interest,—as to which he, Ralph, had so constantly endeavoured to protect himself from an interest that should be too absorbing,—had in the last moment escaped him. And now, in this sad and solemn hour, he could not keep himself from thinking of that loss. As he had stood in the room in which the dead body of his father had been lying, he had cautioned himself against this feeling. But still he had known that it had been present to him. Let him do what he would with his own thoughts, he could not hinder them from running back to the fact that by his father's sudden death he had lost the possession of the Newton estate. He hated himself for remembering such a fact at such a time, but he could not keep himself from remembering it. His father had fought a life-long battle to make him the heir of Newton, and had perished in the moment of his victory,—but before

his victory was achieved. Ralph had borne his success well while he had thought that his success was certain; but now——! He knew that all such subjects should be absent from his mind with such cause for grief as weighed upon him at this moment,—but he could not drive away the reflection. That other Ralph Newton had won upon the post. He would endeavour to bear himself well, but he could not but remember that he had been beaten. And there was the father who had loved him so well lying dead!

When he reached the house, George Morris was still with him. Gregory, to whom he had spoken hardly a word, did not come beyond the parsonage. Ralph could not conceal from himself, could hardly conceal from his outward manner, the knowledge that Gregory must be aware that his cause had triumphed. And yet he hated himself for thinking of these things, and believed himself to be brutal in that he could not conceal his thoughts. "I'll send over for a few things, and stay with you for a day or two," said George Morris. "It would be ~~bad~~ that you should be left here alone." But Ralph would not permit the visit. "My father's nephew will be here to-morrow," he said, "and I would rather that he should find me alone." In thinking of it all, he remembered that he must withdraw his claims to the hand of Mary Bonner, now that he was nobody. He could have no pretension now to offer his hand to any such girl as Mary Bonner!

CHAPTER XXXII.

SIR THOMAS AT HOME.

SIR THOMAS UNDERWOOD was welcomed home at the villa with a double amount of sympathy and glory,—that due to him for his victory being added to that which came to him on the score of his broken arm. A hero is never so much a hero among women as when he has been wounded in the battle. The very weakness which throws him into female hands imparts a moiety of his greatness to the women who for the while possess him, and creates a partnership in heroism, in which the feminine half delights to make the most of its own share. During the week at Percy-cross and throughout the journey Patience had had this half all to herself; and there had arisen to her considerable enjoyment from it as soon as she found that her father would probably be none the worse for his accident after a few weeks. She saw more of him now than she had done for years, and was able, after a fashion, to work her quiet, loving, female will with him, exacting from him an obedience to feminine sway such as had not been exercised on him since his wife's death. He himself had been humbled, passive, and happy. He had taken his gruel, grumbled with modesty, and consoled himself with constantly reflecting that he was member of Parliament for the borough of Percy-cross.

During their journey, although Patience was urgent in requiring from her father quiescence, lest he should injure himself by too much exertion, there were many words spoken both as to Clarissa and Mary Bonner. As to poor Clary, Sir Thomas was very decided that if there were any truth in the suspicion which had been now roused in his mind as to Ralph the heir, the thing must be put an end to at once. Ralph who had been the heir was now in possession of that mess of pottage for which he had sold his inheritance,—so said Sir Thomas to his daughter,—and would undoubtedly consume that, as he had consumed the other mess which should have lasted him till the inheritance was his own. And he told to Patience the whole story as to Polly Neefit,—the whole story, at least, as he had heard it. Ralph had declared to Sir Thomas, when discussing the expedience of his proposed marriage with the daughter of the breeches-maker, that he was attached to Polly Neefit. Sir Thomas had done all he could to dissuade the young man from a marriage which, in his eyes, was disgraceful; but he could not bring himself to look with favour on affections transferred so quickly from the breeches-maker's

daughter to his own. There must be no question of a love affair between Clary and the foolish heir who had disinherited himself by his folly. All this was doubly painful to Patience. She suffered first for her sister, the violence of whose feelings were so well known to her, and so completely understood; and then on her own account she was obliged to endure the conviction that she was deceiving her father. Although she had allowed something of the truth to escape from her, she had not wilfully told her sister's secret. But looking at the matter from her father's point of view, and hearing all that her father now said, she was brought in guilty of hypocrisy in the court of her own conscience.

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"Dear papa, don't be angry. There may be a truth which had better not be told. What we both want is that Clary shouldn't suffer. If you question her she will suffer. You may be sure of this,—that she will obey your wishes."

"How can she obey them, unless she knows them?"

"She shall know them," said Patience. But Sir Thomas would give no promise.

On that same day Sir Thomas sent for his niece into his room, and there read to her the letter which he had received from the Squire's son. It was now the last week of October,—that short blessed morsel of time which to the poor Squire at Newton was the happiest of his life. He was now cutting down trees and building farm-houses, and looking after his stud in all the glory of his success. Ralph had written his letter, and had received his answer,—and he also was successful and glorious. That fatal day on which the fox would not break from Barford Woods had not yet arrived. Mary Bonner heard the letter read, and listened to Sir Thomas's speech without a word, without a blush, and without a sign. Sir Thomas began his speech very well, but became rather misty towards the end, when he found himself unable to reduce Mary to a state of feminine confusion. "My dear," he began, "I have received a letter which I think it is my duty to read to you."

"A letter, uncle?"

"Yes, my dear. Sit down while I read it. I may as well tell you at once that it is a letter which has given me very great satisfaction. It is from a young gentleman;"—upon hearing this announcement Mary's face assumed a look of settled, collected strength, which never left it for a moment during the remainder of the interview,—“yes; from a young gentleman, and I may say that I never read a letter which I thought to be more honourable to the writer. It is from Mr. Ralph Newton,—not the Ralph with whom you have found us to be so intimate, but from the other who will some day be Mr. Newton of Newton Priory." Then Sir Thomas looked into his niece's face, hoping to see there something of the flutter of expectant triumph. But there was neither flutter nor triumph in Mary's countenance. He read the letter, sitting up in his bed, with his left arm in a sling, and then he handed it to her. "You had better look at it yourself, my dear." Mary took the letter, and sat as though she were reading it. It seemed to Sir Thomas that she was reading it with the cold accuracy of a cautious attorney;—but in truth her eyes did not follow a single word of the letter. There was neither flutter nor triumph in her face, or in the movement of her limbs, or in the quiet, almost motionless carriage of her body; but, nevertheless, the pulses of her heart beat so strongly, that had all depended on it she could not have read a word of the letter. "Well, my dear," said Sir Thomas, when he thought that ample time had been given for the perusal. Mary simply folded the paper together and returned it into his hands. "I have told him, as I was bound to do, my dear, that as far as I was concerned, I should be happy to receive him; but that for any other answer, I must refer him to you. Of

course it will be for you to give him what answer your heart dictates. But I may say this,—and it is my duty to say it as your guardian and nearest relative;—the way in which he has put forward his request shows him to be a most honourable man; all that I have ever heard of him is in his favour; he is a gentleman every inch of him; and as for his prospects in life, they are such that they entitle him to address almost any lady in the land. Of course you will follow the dictates of your own heart, as I said; but I cannot myself fancy any greater good fortune that could come in the way of a young woman than the honest affections of such a man as this Ralph Newton." Then Sir Thomas paused for some reply, but Mary had none ready for him. "Of course I have no questions to ask," he said, and then again paused. But still Mary did not speak. "I dare say he will be here before long, and I hope that he may meet with a happy reception. I at least shall be glad to see him, for I hold him in great honour. And as I look upon marriage as the happiest lot for all women, and as I think that this would be a happy marriage, I do hope,—I do hope—— But as I said before, all that must be left to yourself. Mary, have you nothing to say?"

"I trust, uncle, you are not tired of me."

"Tired of you! Certainly not. I have not been with you since you have been here as much as I should have wished because,—indeed for various reasons. But we all like you, and nobody wants to get rid of you. But there is a way in which young ladies leave their own homes, which is generally thought to be matter of congratulation. But, as I said before, nobody shall press you."

"Dear uncle, I am so full of thanks to you for your kindness."

"But it is of course my duty as your guardian to tell you that in my opinion this gentleman is entitled to your esteem."

After that Mary left him without another word, and taking her hat and cloak as she passed through the hall went at once out into the garden. It was a fine autumn morning, almost with a touch of summer in it. We do not know here that special season which across the Atlantic is called the Indian summer,—that last glow of the year's warmth which always brings with it a half melancholy conviction of the year's decay, —which in itself is so delightful, would be so full of delight, were it not for the consciousness which it seems to contain of being the immediate precursor of winter with all its horrors. There is no sufficient constancy with us of the recurrence of such a season, to make any special name needful. But now and again there comes a day, when the winds of the equinox have lulled themselves, and the chill of October rains have left the earth, and the sun gives a genial, luxurious warmth, with no power to scorch, with strength only to comfort. But here, as elsewhere, this luxury is laden with melancholy, because it tells us of decay, and is the harbinger of death. This

was such a day, and Mary Bonner, as she hurried into a shrubbery walk, where she could wander unseen, felt both the sadness and the softness of the season. There was a path which ran from the front gate of the villa grounds through shrubs and tall evergreens down to the river, and was continued along the river-bank up through the flower-garden to windows opening from the drawing-room. Here she walked alone for more than an hour, turning as she came to the river in order that she might not be seen from the house.

Mary Bonner, of whose character hitherto but little has been said, was, at any rate, an acute observer. Very soon after her first introduction to Ralph the heir,—Ralph who had for so many years been the intimate friend of the Underwood family,—she perceived something in the manner of that very attractive young man which conveyed to her a feeling that, if she so pleased, she might count him as an admirer of her own. She had heard then, as was natural, much of the brilliance of his prospects, and but little,—as was also natural,—of what he had done to mar them. And she also perceived, or fancied that she perceived, that her cousin Clary gave many of her thoughts to the heir. Now Mary Bonner understood the importance to herself of a prosperous marriage, as well as any girl ever did understand its great significance. She was an orphan, living in fact on the charity of her uncle. And she was aware that having come to her uncle's house when all the weakness and attractions of her childhood were passed, she could have no hold on him or his such as would have been hers had she grown to be a woman beneath his roof. There was a thoughtfulness too about her,—a thoughtfulness which some, perhaps, may call worldliness,—which made it impossible for her not to have her own condition constantly in her mind. In her father's lifetime she had been driven by his thoughtlessness and her own sterner nature to think of these things; and in the few months that had passed between her father's death and her acceptance in her uncle's house she had taught herself to regard the world as an arena in which she must fight a battle by her own strength with such weapons as God had given to her. God had, indeed, given to her many weapons, but she knew but of one. She did know that God had made her very beautiful. But she regarded her beauty after an unfeminine fashion,—as a thing of value, but as a chattel of which she could not bring herself to be proud. Might it be possible that she should win for herself by her beauty some position in the world less burdensome, more joyous than that of a governess, and less dependent than that of a daily recipient of her uncle's charity?

She had had lovers in the West Indies,—perhaps a score of them, but they had been nothing to her. Her father's house had been so constituted that it had been impossible for her to escape the very plainly spoken admiration of captains, lieutenants, and Colonial

secretaries. In the West Indies gentlemen do speak so very plainly, on, or without, the smallest encouragement, that ladies accept such speaking much as they do in England the attention of a handkerchief lifted or an offer for a dance. It had all meant nothing to Mary Bonner, who from her earliest years of girlhood had been accustomed to captains, lieutenants, and even to midshipmen. But, through it all, she had grown up with serious thoughts, and something of a conviction that love-making was but an ugly amusement. As far as it had been possible she had kept herself aloof from it, and though run after for her beauty, had been unpopular as being a "proud, cold, meaningless minx." When her father died she would speak to no one; and then it had been settled among the captains, lieutenants, and Colonial secretaries that she was a proud, cold, meaningless minx. And with this character she left the island. Now there came to her, naturally I say, this question;—What lovers might she find in England, and, should she find lovers, how should she deal with them? There are among us many who tell us that no pure-minded girl should think of finding a lover,—should only deal with him, when he comes, as truth, and circumstances, and parental control may suggest to her. If there be girls so pure, it certainly seems that no human being expects to meet them. Such was not the purity of Mary Bonner,—if pure she was. She did think of some coming lover,—did hope that there might be for her some prosperity of life as the consequence of the love of some worthy man whom she, in return, might worship. And then there had come Ralph Newton the heir.

Now to Mary Bonner,—as also to Clarissa Underwood, and to Patience, and to old Mrs. Brownlow, and a great many others, Ralph the heir did not appear in quite those colours which he probably will in the reader's eyes. These ladies, and a great many other ladies and gentlemen who reckoned him among their acquaintance, were not accurately acquainted with his transactions with Messrs. Neefit, Mogg, and Horsball; nor were they thoroughly acquainted with the easy nature of our hero's changing convictions. To Clarissa he certainly was heroic; to Patience he was very dear; to old Mrs. Brownlow he was almost a demigod; to Mr. Poojean he was an object of envy. To Mary Bonner, as she first saw him, he was infinitely more fascinating than the captains and lieutenants of West Indian regiments, or than Colonial secretaries generally.

It was during that evening at Mrs. Brownlow's that Mary Bonner resolutely made up her mind that she would be as stiff and cold to Ralph the heir as the nature of their acquaintance would allow. She had seen Clarissa without watching, and, without thinking, she had resolved. Mr. Newton was handsome, well to do, of good address, and clever;—he was also attractive; but he should not be attractive for her. She would not, as her first episode in her English life, rob

a cousin of a lover. And so her mind was made up, and no word was spoken to any one. She had no confidences. There was no one in whom she could confide. Indeed, there was no need for confidence. As she left Mrs. Brownlow's house on that evening she slipped her arm through that of Patience, and the happy Clarissa was left to walk home with Ralph the heir,—as the reader may perhaps remember.

Then that other Ralph had come, and she learned in half-pronounced ambiguous whispers what was the nature of his position in the world. She did not know,—at that time her cousins did not know,—how nearly successful were the efforts made to dispossess the heir of his inheritance in order that this other Newton might possess it. But she saw, or thought that she saw, that this was the gallanter man of the two. Then he came again, and then again, and she knew that her own beauty was of avail. She encouraged him not at all. It was not in her nature to give encouragement to a man's advances. It may, perhaps, be said of her that she had no power to do so. What was in her of the graciousness of feminine love, of the leaning, clinging, flattering softness of woman's nature, required some effort to extract, and had never hitherto been extracted. But within her own bosom she told herself that she thought that she could give it, if the asking for it were duly done. Then came the first tidings of his heirship, of his father's success,—and then, close upon the heels of those tidings, this heir's humbly expressed desire to be permitted to woo her. There was all the flutter of triumph in her bosom, as that letter was read to her, and yet there was no sign of it in her voice or in her countenance.

Nor could it have been seen had she been met walking in the shade of that shrubbery. And yet she was full of triumph. Here was the man to whom her heart had seemed to turn almost at first sight, as it had never turned to man before. She had deigned to think of him as of one she could love;—and he loved her. As she paced the walk it was also much to her that this man who was so generous in her eyes should have provided for him so noble a place in the world. She quite understood what it was to be the wife of such a one as the Squire of Newton. She had grieved for Clary's sake when she heard that the former heir should be heir no longer,—suspecting Clary's secret. But she could not so grieve as to be insensible of her own joy. And then there was something in the very manner in which the man approached her, which gratified her pride while it touched her heart. About that other Ralph there was a tone of sustained self-applause, which seemed to declare that he had only to claim any woman and to receive her. There was an old-fashioned mode of wooing of which she had read and dreamed, that implied a homage which she knew that she desired. This homage her Ralph was prepared to pay.

For an hour she paced the walk, not thinking, but enjoying what she knew. There was nothing in it requiring thought. He was to come, and till he should come there was nothing that she need either say or do. Till he should come she would do nothing and say nothing. Such was her determination when Clarissa's step was heard, and in a moment Clarissa's arm was round her waist. "Mary," she said, "you must come out with me. Come and walk with me. I am going to Mrs. Brownlow's. You must come."

"To walk there and back?" said Mary, smiling.

"We will return in an omnibus; but you must come. Oh, I have so much to say to you."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"TELL ME AND I'LL TELL YOU."

"PAPA has told me all about it," were Clarissa's first words as soon as they were out of the gate on the road to Mrs. Brownlow's.

"All about what, Clary?"

"Oh you know;—or rather it was Patience told me, and then I asked papa. I am so glad."

Mary had as yet hardly had time to think whether the coming of this letter to her uncle would or would not be communicated to her cousins; but had she thought, she would have been almost sure that Sir Thomas would be more discreet. The whole matter was to her so important, so secret, almost so solemn, that she could hardly imagine that it should be discussed among the whole household. And yet she felt a strong longing within herself to be able to talk of it to some one. Of the two cousins Clary was certainly her favourite, and had she been forced to consult any one, she would have consulted Clary. But an absolute confidence in such a matter with a chosen friend, the more delightful it might appear, was on that very account the more difficult of attainment. It was an occasion for thought, for doubt, and almost for dismay; and now Clary rushed into it as though everything could be settled in a walk from Fulham to Parson's Green! "It is very good of you to be glad, Clary," said the other,—hardly knowing why she said this, and yet meaning it. If in truth Clary was glad, it was good of her. For this man to whom Clary was alluding had won from her own lover all his inheritance.

"I like him so much. You will let me talk about him; won't you?"

"Oh, yes," said Mary.

"Do; pray do. There are so many reasons why we should tell each other everything." This elicited no promise from Mary. "If I thought that you would care, I would tell you all."

"I care about everything that concerns you, Clary."

"But I didn't bring you out to talk about myself now. I want to tell you how much I like your Ralph Newton."

"But he isn't mine."

"Yes he is;—at any rate, if you like to have him. And of course you will like. Why should you not? He is everything that is nice and good;—and now he is to be the owner of all the property. What I want to tell you is this; I do not begrudge it to you."

Why should Clarissa begrudge or not begrudge the property? Mary understood it all, but nothing had been said entitling her to speak as though she understood it. "I don't think you would begrudge me anything that you thought good for me," said Mary.

"And I think that Mr. Ralph Newton,—this Mr. Ralph Newton, is very good for you. Nothing could be so good. In the first place would it not be very nice to have you mistress of Newton Priory? Only that shouldn't come properly first."

"And what should come first, Clary?"

"Oh,—of course that you should love him better than anything in the world. And you do,—don't you?"

"It is too sudden to say that yet, Clary."

"But I am sure you will. Don't you feel that you will? Come, Mary, you should tell me something."

"There is so little to tell."

"Then you are afraid of me. I wanted to tell you everything."

"I am not afraid of you. But, remember, it is hardly more than an hour ago since I first heard of Mr. Newton's wishes, and up to that moment nothing was further from my dreams."

"I was sure of it, ever so long ago," said Clarissa.

"Oh, Clary!"

"I was. I told Patience how it was to be. I saw it in his eyes. One does see these things. I knew it would be so; and I told Patience that we three would be three Mrs. Newtons. But that of course was nonsense."

"Nonsense, indeed."

"I mean about Patience."

"And what about yourself, Clary?" Clarissa made no answer, and yet she was burning to tell her own story. She was most anxious to tell her own story, but only on the condition of reciprocal confidence. The very nature of her story required that the confidence should be reciprocal. "You said that you wanted to tell me everything," said Mary.

"And so I do."

"You know how glad I shall be to hear."

"That is all very well, but,——" And then Clarissa paused.

"But what, dear ?"

"You do mean to accept Mr. Newton ?"

Now it was time for Mary to pause. "If I were to tell you my whole heart," she said, "I should be ashamed of what I was saying; and yet I do not know that there is any cause for shame."

"There can be none," said Clary. "I am sure of that."

"My acquaintance with Mr. Newton is very, very slight. I liked him,—oh, so much. I thought him to be high-spirited, manly, and a fine gentleman. I never saw any man who so much impressed me."

"Of course not," said Clarissa, making a gesture as though she would stop on the high road and clasp her hands together, in which, however, she was impeded by her parasol and her remembrance of her present position.

"But it is so much to say that one will love a man better than all the world, and go to him, and belong to him, and be his wife."

"Ah ;—but if one does love him !"

"I can hardly believe that love can grow so quickly."

"Tell the truth, Mary ; has it not grown ?"

"Indeed I cannot say. There ; you shall have the whole truth. When he comes to me,—and I suppose he will come."

"There isn't much doubt of that."

"If he does come ——"

"Well ?"

"I hardly know what I shall say to him. I shall try to—to love him."

"Of course you will love him,—better than all the world."

"I know that he is paying me the greatest compliment that a man can pay to a woman. And there is no earthly reason why I should not be proud to accept all that he offers me. I have nothing of my own to bestow in return."

"But you are so beautiful."

Mary would make no pretence of denying this. It was true that that one great feminine possession did belong to her. "After all," she said, "how little does beauty signify ! It attracts, but it can make no man happy. He has everything to give to a wife, and he ought to have much in return for what he gives."

"You don't mean that a girl should refuse a rich man because she has no fortune of her own ?"

"No ; not quite that. But she ought to think whether she can be of use to him."

"Of course you will be of use, my dear ;—of the greatest use in

the world. That's his affair, and he is the best judge of what will be of use. You will love him, and other men will envy him, and that will be everything. Oh dear, I do so hope he will come soon."

"And I,—I almost hope he will not. I shall be so afraid to see him. The first meeting will be so awful. I shall not dare to look him in the face."

"But it is all settled."

"No ;—not settled, Clary."

"Yes ; it is settled. And now I will tell you what I mean when I say I do not begrudge him to you. That is——; I do not know whether you will care to be told."

"I care very much, Clary. I should be very unhappy if you did begrudge me anything."

"Of course you know that our Ralph Newton, as we call him, ought to have been the heir."

"Oh, yes."

"I needn't explain it all ; only,—only——"

"Only he is everything to you. Is it that, Clary ?"

"Yes ; it is that. He is everything to me. I love him——. Oh, yes, I do love him ! But, Mary, I am not such a happy girl as you are. Sometimes I think he hardly cares for me."

"But he has asked you to care for him ?"

"Well ;—I don't know. I think he has. He has told me, I know, that he loved me dearly,—better than any one."

"And what answer did you make to him, Clary ?"

Clarissa had the whole scene on the lawn at Popham Villa so clearly impressed upon her memory, that an eternity of years, as she thought, could obliterate no one of its incidents and render doubtful no tone of his voice, no word that her lover had spoken. His conduct had at that time been so violent that she had answered him only with tears and protestations of undying anger. But her tears had been dried, and her anger had passed away ;—while the love remained. Ralph, her Ralph, of course knew well enough that the tears were dry and the anger gone. She could understand that he would understand that. But the love which he had protested, if it were real love, would remain. And why should she doubt him ? The very fact that he was so dear to her, made such doubts almost disgraceful. And yet there was so much cause for doubt. Patience doubted. She knew herself that she feared more than she hoped. She had resolved gallantly that she would be true to her own heart, even though by such truth she should be preparing for herself a life of disappointment. She had admitted the passion, and she would stand by it. In all her fears, too, she consoled herself by the reflection that her lover was hindered, not by want of earnestness

or want of truth,—but by the state of his affairs. While he was still in debt, striving to save his inheritance, but tormented by the growing certainty that it must pass away from him, how could he give himself up to love-making and preparations for marriage? Clary made excuses for him which no one else would have made, and so managed to feed her hopes. "I made him no answer," she said at last.

"And yet you knew you loved him."

"Yes; I knew that. I can tell you, and I told Patience. But I could not tell him." She paused a moment thinking whether she could describe the whole scene; but she found that she could not do that. "I shall tell him, perhaps, when he comes again; that is, if he does come."

"If he loves you he will come."

"I don't know. He has all these troubles on him, and he will be very poor;—what will seem to him to be very poor. It would not be poor for me, but for him it would."

"Would that hinder him?"

"How can I say? There are so many things a girl cannot know. He may still be in debt, and then he has been brought up to want so much. But it will make no more difference in me. And now you will understand why I should tell you that I will never begrudge you your good fortune. If all should come right, you shall give us a little cottage near your grand house, and you will not despise us." Poor Clary, when she spoke of her possible future lord, and the little cottage on the Newton demesne, hardly understood the feelings with which a disinherited heir must regard the property which he has lost.

"Dear, dearest Clary," said Mary Bonner, pressing her cousin's arm.

They had now reached Mrs. Brownlow's house, and the old lady was delighted to receive them. Of course she began to discuss at once the great news. Sir Thomas had had his arm broken, and was now again a member of Parliament. Mrs. Brownlow was a thorough-going Tory, and was in an ecstasy of delight that her old friend should have been successful. The success seemed to be so much the greater in that the hero had suffered a broken bone. And then there were many questions to be asked? Would Sir Thomas again be Solicitor-General by right of his seat in Parliament?—for on such matters Mrs. Brownlow was rather hazy in her conceptions as to the working of the British Constitution. And would he live at home? Clarissa would not say that she and Patience expected such a result. All that she could suggest of comfort on this matter was that there would be now something of a fair cause for excusing their father's residence at his London chambers.

But there was a subject more enticing to the old lady even than

Sir Thomas's triumphs; a subject as to which there could not be any triumph,—only dismay; but not, on that account, the less interesting. Ralph Newton had sold his inheritance. "I believe it is all settled," said Clarissa, demurely.

"Dear, dear, dear, dear!" groaned the old lady. And while she groaned Clarissa furtively cast a smile upon her cousin. "It is the saddest thing I ever knew," said Mrs. Brownlow. "And, after all, for a young man who never can be anybody, you know."

"Oh yes," said Clarissa, "he can be somebody."

"You know what I mean, my dear. I think it very shocking, and very wrong. Such a fine estate, too!"

"We all like Mr. Newton very much indeed," said Clarissa. "Papa thinks he is a most charming young man. I never knew papa taken with any one so much. And so do we all,—Patience and I,—and Mary."

"But, my dear," began Mrs. Brownlow,—Mrs. Brownlow had always thought that Ralph the heir would ultimately marry Clarissa Underwood, and that it was a manifest duty on his part to do so. She had fancied that Clarissa had expected it herself, and had believed that all the Underwoods would be broken-hearted at this transfer of the estate. "I don't think it can be right," said Mrs. Brownlow; "and I must say that it seems to me that old Mr. Newton ought to be ashamed of himself. Just because this young man happens to be, in a sort of a way, his own son, he is going to destroy the whole family. I think that it is very wicked." But she had not a word of censure for the heir who had consumed his mess of pottage.

"Wasn't she grand?" said Clary, as soon as they were out again upon the road. "She is such a dear old woman, but she doesn't understand anything. I couldn't help giving you a look when she was abusing our friend. When she knows it all, she'll have to make you such an apology."

"I hope she will not do that."

"She will if she does not forget all about it. She does forget things. There is one thing I don't agree with her in at all. I don't see any shame in your Ralph having the property; and, as to his being nobody, that is all nonsense. He would be somebody, wherever he went, if he had not an acre of property. He will be Mr. Newton, of Newton Priory, just as much as anybody else could be. He has never done anything wrong." To all which Mary Bonner had very little to say. She certainly was not prepared to blame the present Squire for having so managed his affairs as to be able to leave the estate to his own son.

The two girls were very energetic, and walked back the whole way to Popham Villa, regardless of a dozen omnibuses that passed them.

"I told her all about our Ralph,—my Ralph,"—said Clary to her sister afterward. "I could not help telling her now."

"Dear Clary," said Patience, "I wish you could help thinking of it always."

"That's quite impossible," said Clarissa, cheerily.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

ALONE IN THE HOUSE.

YOUNG Newton at last found himself alone in the house at Newton Priory after his father's death. He had sent George Morris away, becoming very stern in his demand to be left to his solitude as long as opposition was made to him. Gregory had come down to him from the parsonage, and had also been dismissed. "Your brother will be here probably to-day," said Ralph, "and then I will send for you."

"I am thinking more of you than of my brother, just now," answered the parson.

"Yes, I know,—and though I cannot talk to you, I know how good you are. I want to see nobody but him. I shall be better alone." Then Gregory had returned to the parsonage.

As soon as Ralph was alone he crept up to the room in which his father's body was lying, and stood silently by the bedside for above an hour. He was struggling to remember the loss he had had in the man, and to forget the loss in wealth and station. No father had ever been better to a son than his father had been to him. In every affair of life his happiness, his prosperity, and his future condition had given motives to his father's conduct. No lover ever worshipped a mistress more thoroughly than his father had idolised him. There had never been love to beat it, never solicitude more perfect and devoted. And yet, as he had been driven home that day, he had allowed his mind to revert to the property, and his regrets to settle themselves on his lost position. It should not be so any longer. He could not keep his mind from dwelling on the thing, but he would think of it as a trifle,—as of a thing which he could afford to lose without sorrow. Whereas he had also lost that which is of all things the most valuable and most impossible to replace,—a friend whose love was perfect.

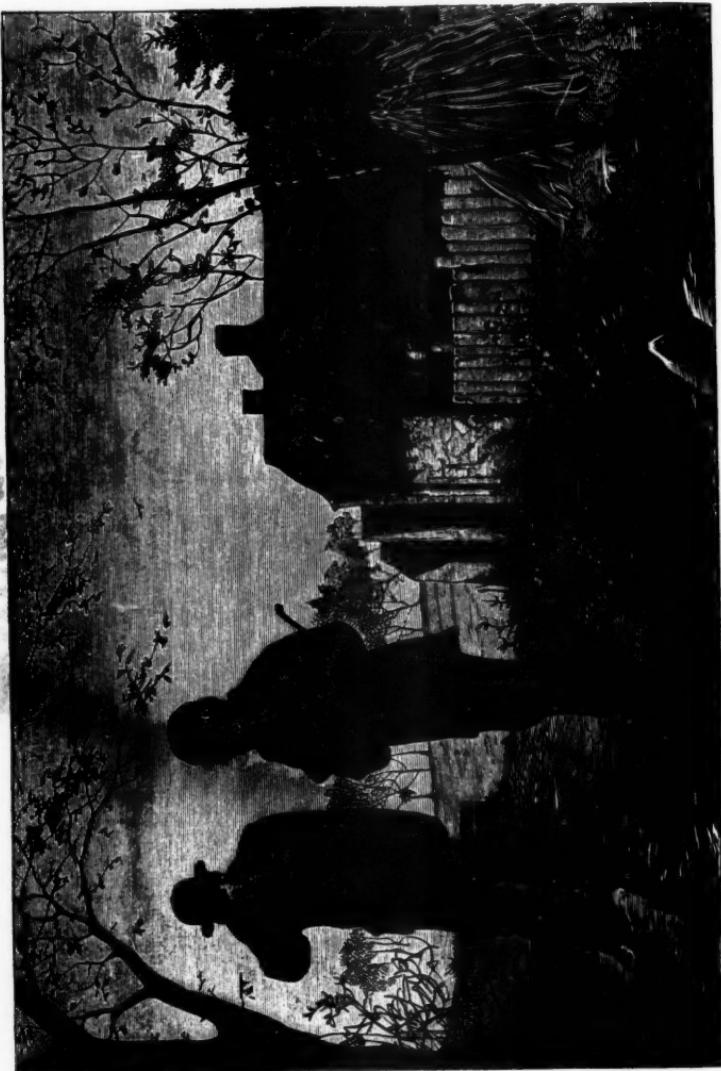
But then there was another loss. He bitterly blamed himself for having written that letter to Sir Thomas Underwood, before he was actually in a position to do as he had proposed. It must all be

unwritten now. Every resolution hitherto taken as to his future life must be abandoned. He must begin again, and plan a new life for himself. It had all come upon him so suddenly that he was utterly at a loss to think what he would do with himself or with his days. There was nothing for him but to go away, and be utterly without occupation, altogether without friends. Friends, indeed, he had,—dear, intimate, loving friends. Gregory Newton and George Morris were his friends. Every tenant on the Newton property was his friend. There was not a man riding with the hunt, worth having as a friend, who was not on friendly terms with him. But all these he must leave altogether. In whatever spot he might find for himself a future residence, that spot could not be at Peele Newton. After what had occurred he could not remain there, now that he was not the heir. And then, again, his thoughts came back from his lost father to his lost inheritance, and he was very wretched.

Between three and four o'clock he took his hat and walked out. He sauntered down along a small stream, which, after running through the gardens, bordered one of the coverts which came up near to the house. He took this path because he knew that he would be alone there, unseen. It had occurred to him already that it would be well that he should give orders to stop the works which his father had commenced, and there had been a moment in which he had almost told one of the servants in the house to do so. But he had felt ashamed at seeming to remember so small a thing. The owner would be there soon, probably in an hour or two, and could stop or could continue what he pleased. Then, as he thought of the ownership of the estate, he reflected that, as the sale had been in truth effected by his namesake, the money promised by his father would be legally due;—would not now be his money. As to the estate itself, that, of course, would go to his namesake as his father's heir. No will had been made leaving the estate to him, and his namesake would be the heir-at-law. Thus he would be utterly beggared. It was not that he actually believed that this would be the case; but his thoughts were morbid, and he took an unwholesome delight in picturing to himself circumstances in their blackest hue. Then he would strike the ground with his stick, in his wrath, because he thought of such things at all. How was it that he was base enough to think of them while the accident, which had robbed him of his father, was so recent?

As the dusk grew on, he emerged out of the copse into the park, and, crossing at the back of the home paddocks, came out upon the road near to Darvell's farm. He passed a few yards up the lane, till at a turn he could discern the dismantled house. As far as he could see through the gloom of the evening, there were no workmen near the place. Some one, he presumed, had given directions that nothing

"RALPH THE HEIR!"



further should be done on a day so sad as this. He stood for awhile looking and listening, and then turned round to enter the park again.

It might be that the new squire was already at the house, and it would be thought that he ought not to be absent. The road from the station to the Priory was not that on which he was standing, and Ralph might have arrived without his knowledge. He wandered slowly back, but, before he could turn in at the park-gate, he was met by a man on the road. It was Mr. Walker, the farmer of Brownriggs, an old man over seventy, who had lived on the property all his life, succeeding his father in the same farm. Walker had known young Newton since he had first been brought to the Priory as a boy, and could speak to him with more freedom than perhaps any other tenant on the estate. "Oh, Mr. Ralph," he said, "this has been a dreary thing!" Ralph, for the first time since the accident, burst out into a flood of tears. "No wonder you take on, Mr. Ralph. He was a good father to you, and a fine gentleman, and one we all respected." Ralph still sobbed, but put his hand on the old man's arm and leaned upon him. "I hope, Mr. Ralph, that things was pretty well settled about the property." Ralph shook his head, but did not speak. "A bargain is a bargain, Mr. Ralph, and I suppose that this bargain was made. The lawyers would know that it had been made."

"It don't matter about that, Mr. Walker," said Ralph; "but the estate would go to my father's nephew as his heir." The farmer started as though he had been shot. "You will have another landlord, Mr. Walker. He can hardly be better than the one you have lost."

"Then, Mr. Ralph, you must bear it manly."

"I think that I can say that I will do that. It is not for the property that I am crying. I hope you don't think that of me, Mr. Walker."

"No, no, no."

"I can bear that;—though it is hard the having to go away and live among strange people. I think I shall get a farm somewhere, and see if I can take a lesson from you. I don't know anything else that I can do."

"You could have the Mordykes, Mr. Ralph," said Mr. Walker, naming a holding on the Newton property as to which there were rumours that it would soon be vacant.

"No, Mr. Walker, it mustn't be here. I couldn't stand that. I must go away from this,—God knows where. I must go away from this, and I shall never see the old place again!"

"Bear it manly, Mr. Ralph," said the farmer.

"I think I shall, after a bit. Good evening, Mr. Walker. I expect

my father's nephew every hour, and I ought to be up at the house when he comes. I shall see you again before I go."

"Yes, yes; that's for certain," said the farmer. They were both thinking of the day on which they would follow the old Squire to his grave in Newton Peele churchyard.

Ralph re-entered the park, and hurried across to the house as though he were afraid that he would be too late to receive the heir; but there had been no arrival, nor had there come any message from the other Ralph. Indeed up to this hour the news had not reached the present owner of Newton Priory. The telegram had been duly delivered at the Moonbeam, where the fortunate youth was staying; but he was hunting on this day, riding the new horse which he had bought from Mr. Pepper, and, up to this moment, did not know anything of that which chance had done for him. Nor did he get back to the Moonbeam till late at night, having made some engagement for dinner after the day's sport. It was not till noon on the following day, the Friday, that a message was received from him at the Priory, saying that he would at once hurry down to Hampshire.

Ralph sat down to dinner all alone. Let what will happen to break hearts and ruin fortunes, dinner comes as long as the means last for providing it. The old butler waited upon him in absolute silence, fearing to speak a word, lest the word at such a time should be ill-spoken. No doubt the old man was thinking of the probable expediency of his retiring upon his savings; feeling, however, that it became him to show, till the last, every respect to all who bore the honoured name of Newton. When the meat had been eaten, the old servant did say a word. "Won't you come round to the fire, Mr. Ralph?" and he placed comfortably before the hearth one of the heavy arm-chairs with which the corners of the broad fire-place were flanked. But Ralph only shook his head, and muttered some refusal. There he sat, square to the table, with the customary bottle of wine before him, leaning back with his hands in his pockets, thinking of his condition in life. The loneliness of the room, the loneliness of the house, were horrible to him. And yet he would not that his solitude should be interrupted. He had been so sitting, motionless, almost overcome by the gloom of the big dark room, for so long a period that he hardly knew whether it was night or not, when a note was brought to him from Gregory. "Dear Ralph,—Shall I not come down to you for an hour?—G. N." He read the note, and sent back a verbal message. "Tell Mr. Gregory that I had rather not." And so he sat motionless till the night had really come, till the old butler brought him his candlestick and absolutely bade him betake himself to bed. He had watched during the whole of the previous night, and now had slumbered in his chair from time to time. But his sleeping had been of that painful, wakeful nature which brings with

it no refreshment. It had been full of dreams, in all of which there had been some grotesque reference to the property, but in none of them had there been any memory of the Squire's terrible death. And yet, as he woke and woke and woke again, it can hardly be said that the truth had come back upon him as a new blow. Through such dreams there seems to exist a double memory, and a second identity. The misery of his isolated position never for a moment left him; and yet there were repeated to him over and over again those bungling, ill-arranged, impossible pictures of trivial transactions about the place, which the slumber of a few seconds sufficed to create in his brain. "Mr. Ralph, you must go to bed;—you must indeed, sir," said the old butler, standing over him with a candle during one of these fitful dreamings.

"Yes, Grey;—yes, I will; directly. Put it down. Thank you. Don't mind sitting up," said Ralph, rousing himself in his chair.

"It's past twelve," Mr. Ralph.

"You can go to bed, you know, Grey."

"No, sir;—no. I'll see you to bed first. It'll be better so. Why, Mr. Ralph, the fire's all out, and you're sitting here perished. You wasn't in bed last night, and you ought to be there now. Come, Mr. Ralph."

Then Ralph rose from his chair and took the candlestick. It was true enough that he had better be in bed. As he shook himself, he felt that he had never been so cold in his life. And then as he moved there came upon him that terrible feeling that everything was amiss with him, that there was no consolation on any side. "That'll do, Grey; good night," he said, as the old man prepared to follow him up-stairs. But Grey was not to be shaken off. "I'll just see you to your room, Mr. Ralph." He wanted to accompany his young master past the door of that chamber in which was lying all that remained of the old master. But Ralph would open the door. "Not to-night, Mr. Ralph," said Grey. But Ralph persisted, and stood again by the bedside. "He would have given me his flesh and blood;—his very life," said Ralph to the butler. "I think no father ever so loved a son. And yet, what has it come to?" Then he stooped down, and put his lips to the cold clay-blue forehead.

"It ain't come to much surely," said old Grey to himself as he crept away to his own room; "and I don't suppose it do come to much mostly when folks go wrong."

Ralph was out again before breakfast, wandering up and down the banks of the stream where the wood hid him, and then he made up his mind that he would at once write again to Sir Thomas Underwood. He must immediately make it understood that that suggestion which he had made in his ill-assumed pride of position must be abandoned. He had nothing now to offer to that queenly princess worthy of the

acceptance of any woman. He was a base-born son, about to be turned out of his father's house because of the disgrace of his birth. In the eye of the law he was nobody. The law allowed to him not even a name;—certainly allowed to him the possession of no relative; denied to him the possibility of any family tie. His father had succeeded within an ace of giving him that which would have created for him family ties, relatives, name and all. The old Squire had understood well how to supersede the law, and to make the harshness of man's enactments of no avail. Had the Squire quite succeeded, the son would have stood his ground, would have called himself Newton of Newton, and nobody would have dared to tell him that he was a nameless bastard. But now he could not even wait to be told. He must tell it himself, and must vanish. He had failed to understand it all while his father was struggling and was yet alive; but he understood it well now. So he came in to his breakfast, resolved that he would write that letter at once.

And then there were orders to be given;—hideous orders. And there was that hideous remembrance that legally he was entitled to give no orders. Gregory came down to him as he sat at breakfast, making his way into the parlour without excuse. "My brother cannot have been at home at either place," he said.

"Perhaps not," said Ralph. "I suppose not."

"The message will be sent after him, and you will hear to-day no doubt."

"I suppose I shall," said Ralph.

Then Gregory in a low voice made the suggestion in reference to which he had come across from the parsonage. "I think that perhaps I and Larkin had better go over to Basingstoke." Larkin was the steward. Ralph again burst out into tears, but he assented; and in this way those hideous orders were given.

As soon as Gregory was gone he took himself to his desk, and did write to Sir Thomas Underwood. His letter, which was perhaps somewhat too punctilious, ran as follows:—

"Newton Priory, 4th November, 186—.

"MY DEAR SIR,—

"I do not know whether you will have heard before this of the accident which has made me fatherless. The day before yesterday my father was killed by a fall from his horse in the hunting-field. I should not have ventured to trouble you with a letter on this subject, nor should I myself have been disposed to write about it at present, were it not that I feel it to be an imperative duty to refer without delay to my last letter to you, and to your very flattering reply. When I wrote to you it was true that my father had made arrangements for purchasing on my behalf the reversion to the property.

That it was so you doubtless were aware from your own personal knowledge of the affairs of Mr. Ralph Newton. Whether that sale was or was not legally completed I do not know. Probably not;—and in regard to my own interests it is to be hoped that it was not completed. But in any event the whole Newton property will pass to your late ward, as my father certainly made no such will as would convey it to me even if the sale were complete.

"It is a sad time for explaining all this, when the body of my poor father is still lying unburied in the house, and when, as you may imagine, I am ill-fitted to think of matters of business; but, after what has passed between us, I conceive myself bound to explain to you that I wrote my last letter under a false impression, and that I can make no such claim to Miss Bonner's favour as I then set up. I am houseless and nameless, and for aught I yet know to the contrary, absolutely penniless. The blow has hit me very hard. I have lost my fortune, which I can bear; I have lost whatever chance I had of gaining your niece's hand, which I must learn to bear; and I have lost the kindest father a man ever had,—which is unbearable.

"Yours very faithfully,

"RALPH NEWTON (so called)."

If it be thought that there was something in the letter which should have been suppressed,—the allusion, for instance, to the possible but most improbable loss of his father's private means, and his morbid denial of his own right to a name which he had always borne, a right which no one would deny him,—it must be remembered that the circumstances of the hour bore very heavily on him, and that it was hardly possible that he should not nurse the grievance which afflicted him. Had he not been alone in these hours he might have carried himself more bravely. As it was, he struggled hard to carry himself well. If no one had ever been told how nearly successful the Squire had been in his struggle to gain the power of leaving the estate to his son, had there been nothing of the triumph of victory, he could have left the house in which he had lived and the position which he had filled almost without sorrow,—certainly without lamentation. In the midst of calamities caused by the loss of fortune, it is the knowledge of what the world will say that breaks us down;—not regret for those enjoyments which wealth can give, and which had been long anticipated.

At two o'clock on this day he got a telegram. "I will be at the parsonage this evening, and will come down at once." Ralph the heir, on his return home late at night, had heard the news, and early on the following morning had communicated with his brother and with his namesake. In the afternoon, after his return from Basingstoke, Gregory again came down to the house, desiring to know whether

Ralph would prefer that the meeting should be at the Priory or at the parsonage, and on this occasion his cousin bore with him. "Why should not your brother come to his own house?" asked Ralph.

"I suppose he feels that he should not claim it as his own."

"That is nonsense. It is his own, and he knows it. Does he think that I am likely to raise any question against his right?"

"I do not suppose that my brother has ever looked at the matter in that light," said the parson. "He is the last man in the world to do so. For the present, at any rate, you are living here and he is not. In such an emergency, perhaps, he feels that it would be better that he should come to his brother than intrude here."

"It would be no intrusion. I should wish him to feel that I am prepared to yield to him instantly. Of course the house cannot be very pleasant for him as yet. He must suffer something of the misery of the occasion before he can enjoy his inheritance. But it will only be for a day or so."

"Dear Ralph," said the parson, "I think you somewhat wrong my brother."

"I endeavour not to do so. I think no ill of him, because I presume he should look for enjoyment from what is certainly his own. He and my father were not friends, and this, which has been to me so terrible a calamity in every way, cannot affect him with serious sorrow. I shall meet him as a friend; but I would sooner meet him here than at the parsonage."

It was at last settled that the two brothers should come down to the great house,—both Ralph the heir, and Gregory the parson; and that the three young men should remain there, at any rate, till the funeral was over. And when this was arranged, the two who had really been fast friends for so many years, were able to talk to each other in true friendship. The solitude which he had endured had been almost too much for the one who had been made so desolate; but at last, warmed by the comfort of companionship, he resumed his manhood, and was able to look his affairs in the face, free from the morbid feeling which had oppressed him. Gregory had his own things brought down from the parsonage, and in order that there might be no hesitation on his brother's part, sent a servant with a note to the station desiring his brother to come at once to the Priory. They resolved to wait dinner for him till after the arrival of a train leaving London at five P.M. By that train the heir came, and between seven and eight he entered the house which he had not seen since he was a boy, and which was now his own.

The receipt of the telegram at the Moonbeam had affected Ralph, who was now in truth the Squire, with absolute awe. He had returned late from a somewhat jovial dinner, in company with his friend Cox,

who was indeed more jovial than was becoming. Ralph was not given to drinking more wine than he could carry decently; but his friend, who was determined to crowd as much enjoyment of life as was possible into the small time allowed him before his disappearance from the world that had known him, was noisy and rollicking. Perhaps it may be acknowledged in plain terms that he was tipsy. They both entered together the sitting-room which Ralph used, and Cox was already calling for brandy and water, when the telegram was handed to Newton. He read it twice before he understood it. His uncle dead! —suddenly dead! And the inheritance all his own! In doing him justice, however, we must admit that he did not at the time admit this to be the case. He did perceive that there must arise some question; but his first feeling, as regarded the property, was one of intense remorse that he should have sold his rights at a moment in which they would so soon have been realised in his own favour. But the awe which struck him was occasioned by the suddenness of the blow which had fallen upon his uncle. "What's up now, old fellow?" hiccupped Mr. Cox.

I wonder whether any polite reader, into whose hands this story may fall, may ever have possessed a drunken friend, and have been struck by some solemn incident at the moment in which his friend is exercising the privileges of intoxication. The effect is not pleasant, nor conducive of good-humour. Ralph turned away in disgust, and leaned upon the chimney-piece, trying to think of what had occurred to him. "What ish it, old chap? Shomebody wants shome tin? I'll stand to you, old fellow."

"Take him away," said Ralph. "He's drunk." Then, without waiting for further remonstrance from the good-natured but now indignant Cox, he went off to his own room.

On the following morning he started for London by an early train, and by noon was with his lawyer. Up to that moment he believed that he had lost his inheritance. When he sent those two telegrams to his brother and to his namesake, he hardly doubted but that the entire property now belonged to his uncle's son. The idea had never occurred to him that, even were the sale complete, he might still inherit the property as his uncle's heir-at-law,—and that he would do so unless his uncle had already bequeathed it to his son. But the attorney soon put him right. The sale had not been yet made. He, Ralph, had not signed a single legal document to that effect. He had done nothing which would have enabled his late uncle to make a will leaving the Newton estate to his son. "The letters which have been written are all waste-paper," said the lawyer. "Even if they were to be taken as binding as agreements for a covenant, they would operate against your cousin,—not in his favour. In such case you would demand the specified price and still inherit."

"That is out of the question," said the heir.

"Quite out of the question," said the attorney. "No doubt Mr. Newton left a will, and under it his son will take whatever property the father had to leave."

And so Ralph the heir found himself to be the owner of it all just at the moment in which he thought that he had lost all chance of the inheritance as the result of his own folly. When he walked out of the lawyer's office he was almost wild with amazement. This was the prize to which he had been taught to look forward through all his boyish days, and all his early manhood ;—but to look forward to it, as a thing that must be very distant, so distant as almost to be lost in the vagueness of the prospect. Probably his youth would have clean passed from him, and he would have entered upon the downhill course of what is called middle life before his inheritance would come to him. He had been unable to wait, and had wasted everything,—nearly everything ; had, at any rate, ruined all his hopes before he was seven-and-twenty ; and yet, now, at seven-and-twenty, it was, as his lawyer assured him, all his own. How nearly had he lost it all ! How nearly had he married the breeches-maker's daughter ! How close upon the rocks he had been. But now all was his own, and he was in truth Newton of Newton, with no embarrassments of any kind which could impose a feather's weight upon his back.

CHAPTER XXXV.

“ SHE'LL ACCEPT YOU, OF COURSE.”

WE will pass over the solemn sadness of the funeral at Newton and the subsequent reading of the old Squire's will. As to the latter, the will was as it had been made some six or seven years ago. The Squire had simply left all that he possessed to his illegitimate son Ralph Newton. There was no difficulty about the will. Nor was there any difficulty about the estate. The two lawyers came down to the funeral. Sir Thomas Underwood would have come but that he was prevented by the state of his arm. A statement showing all that had been done in the matter was prepared for him, but it was agreed on all sides that the sale had not been made, and that the legitimate heir must succeed to the property. No one was disposed to dispute the decision. The Squire's son had never for a moment supposed that he could claim the estate. Nor did Ralph the heir suppose for a moment that he could surrender it after the explanation which he had received from the lawyer in London.

The funeral was over, and the will had been read, and at the end of November the three young men were still living together in the great house at Newton. The heir had gone up to London once or twice, instigated by the necessity of the now not difficult task of raising a little ready money. He must at once pay off all his debts. He must especially pay that which he owed to Mr. Neefit; and he must do so with many expressions of his gratitude,—perhaps with some expressions of polite regret at the hardness of Polly's heart towards him. But he must do so certainly without any further entreaty that Polly's heart might be softened. Ah,—with what marvellous good fortune had he escaped from that pitfall! For how much had he not to be thankful to some favouring goddess who must surely have watched over him from his birth! From what shipwrecks had he not escaped! And now he was Squire of Newton, with wealth and all luxurie at command, hampered with no wife, oppressed by no debts, free from all cares. As he thought of his perfect freedom in these respects, he remembered his former resolution as to Mary Bonner. That resolution he would carry out. It would be well for him now to marry a wife, and of all the women he had ever seen Mary Bonner was certainly the most beautiful. With Newton all his own, with such a string of horses as he would soon possess, and with such a wife at the head of his table, whom need he envy, and how many were there who would not envy him?

Throughout November he allowed his horses to remain at the Moonbeam, being somewhat in doubt whether or no he would return to that fascinating hostelry. He received one or two most respectful letters from Mr. Horsball, in which glowing accounts were given of the sport of the season, and the health of his horses, and offers made of most disinterested services. Rooms should be ready for him at a moment's notice if he liked at any time to run over for a week's hunting. It was quite evident that in the eyes of Mr. Horsball Newton of Newton was a great man. And there came congratulations from Mr. Cox, in which no allusion whatever was made to the Squire's somewhat uncivil conduct at their last meeting. Mr. Cox trusted that his dearest friend would come over and have another spell at the Moonbeam before he settled down for life;—and then hinted in language that was really delicate in the niceness of its expression, that if he, Cox, were but invited to spend a week or two at Newton Priory before he banished himself for life to Australia, he would be able to make his way over the briny deep with a light heart and an uncomplaining tongue. "You know, old fellow, how true I've always been to you," wrote Cox, in language of the purest friendship. "As true as steel,—to sausages in the morning and brandy and soda at night," said Ralph to himself as he read this.

He behaved with thorough kindness to his cousin. The three men lived together for a month, and their intercourse was as pleasant as was possible under the circumstances. Of course there was no hunting during this month at Newton. Nor indeed did the heir see a hound till December, although, as the reader is aware, he was not particularly bound to revere his uncle's memory. He made many overtures to his namesake. He would be only too happy if his cousin,—he always called the Squire's son his cousin,—would make Newton his home for the next twelvemonth. It was found that the Squire had left behind him something like forty thousand pounds, so that the son was by no means to be regarded as a poor man. It was his idea at present that he would purchase in some pleasant county as much land as he might farm himself, and there set up his staff for life. "And get about two-and-a-half per cent. for your money," said the heir, who was beginning to consider himself learned in such matters, and could talk of land as a very serious thing in the way of a possession.

"What else am I to do?" said the other. "Two-and-a-half per cent. with an occupation is better than five per cent. with none. I should make out the remainder, too, by farming the land myself. There is nothing else in the world that I could do."

As for remaining twelve months at Newton, that was of course out of the question. Nevertheless, when December came he was still living in the house, and had consented to remain there till Christmas

should have passed. He had already heard of a farm in Norfolk. "The worst county for hunting in England," the heir had said. "Then I must try and live without hunting," said Ralph who was not the heir. During all this time not a horse was sent to the meet from the Newton stables. The owner of Newton was contented to see the animals exercised in the park, and to amuse himself by schooling them over hurdles, and by high jumping at the bar.

During the past month the young Squire had received various letters from Sir Thomas Underwood, and the other Ralph had received one. With Sir Thomas's caution, advice, and explanations to his former ward, the story has no immediate concern; but his letter to him who was to have been Mary Bonner's suitor may concern us more nearly. It was very short, and the reader shall have it entire.

"Popham Villa, 10th November, 186—.

"**MY DEAR MR. NEWTON,—**

"I have delayed answering your letter for a day or two in order that it may not disturb you till the last sad ceremony be over. I do not presume to offer you consolation in your great sorrow. Such tenders should only be made by the nearest and the dearest. Perhaps you will permit me to say that what little I have seen of you and what further I have heard of you assure to you my most perfect sympathy.

"On that other matter which gave occasion for your two letters to me I shall best perhaps discharge my duty by telling you that I showed them both to my niece; and that she feels, as do I, that they are both honourable to you, and of a nature to confer honour upon her. The change in your position, which I acknowledge to be most severe, undoubtedly releases you, as it would have released her,—had she been bound and chose to accept such release.

"Whenever you may be in this neighbourhood we shall be happy to see you.

"The state of my arm still prevents me from writing with ease.

"Yours very faithfully,

"THOMAS UNDERWOOD."

Newton, when he received this letter, struggled hard to give to it its proper significance, but he could bring himself to no conclusion respecting it. Sir Thomas had acknowledged that he was released,—and that Mary Bonner would also have been released had she placed herself under any obligation; but Sir Thomas did not say a word from which his correspondent might gather whether in his present circumstances he might still be regarded as an acceptable suitor. The letter was most civil, most courteous, almost cordial in its expression of sympathy; but yet it did not contain a word of encouragement.

It may be said that the suitor had himself so written to the lady's uncle, as to place himself out of the way of all further encouragement;—as to have put it beyond the power of his correspondent to write a word to him that should have in it any comfort. Certainly he had done so. He had clearly shown in his second letter that he had abandoned all idea of making the match as to which he had shown so much urgent desire in his first letter. He had explained that the marriage would now be impossible, and had spoken of himself as a ruined, broken man, all whose hopes were shipwrecked. Sir Thomas could hardly have told him in reply that Mary Bonner would still be pleased to see him. And yet Mary Bonner had almost said so. She had been very silent when the letter was read to her. The news of Mr. Newton's death had already reached the family at Popham Villa, and had struck them all with awe. How it might affect the property even Sir Thomas had not absolutely known at first; though he was not slow to make it understood that in all probability this terrible accident would be ruinous to the hopes which his niece had been justified in entertaining. At that hour Mary had spoken not a word;—nor could she be induced to speak respecting it either by Patience or Clarissa. Even to them she could not bring herself to say that if the man really loved her he would still come to her and say so. There was a feeling of awe upon her which made her mute, and stern, and altogether unplastic in the hands of her friends. It seemed even to Patience that Mary was struck by a stunning sorrow at the ruin which had come upon her lover's prospects. But it was not so at all. The thought wronged her utterly. What stunned her was this,—that she could not bring herself to express a passion for a man whom she had seen so seldom, with whom her conversation had been so slight, from whom personally she had received no overtures of attachment,—even though he were ruined. She could not bring herself to express such a passion;—but yet it was there. When Clarissa thought that she might obtain if not a word, at least a tear, Mary appeared to be dead to all feeling, though crushed by what she had lost. She was thinking the while whether it might be possible for such a one as her to send to the man and to tell him that that which had now occurred had of a sudden made him really dear to her. Thoughts of maiden boldness flitted across her mind, but she could not communicate them even to the girls who were her friends. Yet in silence and in solitude she resolved that the time should come in which she would be bold.

Then young Newton's second letter reached the house, and that also had been read to her. "He is quite right," said Sir Thomas. "Of course it releases both of you."

"There was nothing to release," said Mary, proudly.

"I mean to say that having made such a proposition as was

contained in his first letter, he was bound to explain his altered position."

"I suppose so," said Mary.

"Of course he was. He had made his offer believing that he could make you mistress of Newton Priory,—and he had made it thinking that he himself could marry in that position. And he would have been in that position had not this most unforeseen and terrible calamity have occurred."

"I do not see that it makes any difference," said Mary, in a whisper.

"What do you mean, my dear?"

"I hardly know, uncle."

"Try to explain yourself, Mary."

"If I had accepted any man when he was rich, I should not go back when he was poor,—unless he wanted it." This also she said in a whisper.

"But you had not accepted him."

"No," said Mary, still in a whisper. Sir Thomas, who was perhaps not very good at such things, did not understand the working of her mind. But had she dared, she would have asked her uncle to tell Mr. Newton to come and see her. Sir Thomas, having some dim inkling of what perhaps might be the case, did add a paragraph to his letter in which he notified to his correspondent that a personal visit would be taken in good part.

By the end of the first week in December things were beginning to settle into shape at the Priory. The three young men were still living together at the great house, and the tenants on the estate had been taught to recognise the fact that Ralph, who had ever been the heir, was in truth the owner. Among the labourers and poorer classes there was no doubt much regret, and that regret was expressed. The tenants, though they all liked the Squire's son, were not upon the whole ill-pleased. It was in proper conformity with English habits and English feelings that the real heir should reign. Among the gentry the young Squire was made as welcome as the circumstances of the heir would admit. According to their way of thinking, personally popular as was the other man, it was clearly better that a legitimate descendant of the old family should be installed at Newton Priory. The old Squire's son rode well to hounds, and was loved by all; but nothing that all the world could do on his behalf would make him Newton of Newton. If only he would remain in the neighbourhood and take some place suited to his income, every house would be open to him. He would be received with no diminution of attachment or respect. Overtures of this nature were made to him. This house could be had for him, and that farm could be made comfortable. He might live among them as a general favourite; but he could not under any circumstances have been,—Newton of Newton.

Nothing, however, was clearer to himself than this;—that as he could not remain in the county as the master of Newton Priory, he would not remain in the county at all.

As things settled down and took shape he began to feel that even in his present condition he might possibly make himself acceptable to such a girl as Mary Bonner. In respect of fortune there could be no reason whatever why he should not offer her his hand. He was in truth a rich man, whereas she had nothing. By birth he was nobody,—absolutely nobody; but then also would he have been nobody had all the lands of Newton belonged to him. When he had written that second letter, waiving all claim to Mary's hand because of the inferiority of his position, he was suffering from a morbid view which he had taken of his own affairs. He was telling himself then,—so assuring himself, though he did not in truth believe the assurance,—that he had lost not only the estate, but also his father's private fortune. At that moment he had been unstrung, demoralized, and unmanned,—so weak that a feather would have knocked him over. The blow had been so sudden, the solitude and gloom of the house so depressing, and his sorrow so crushing, that he was ready to acknowledge that there could be no hope for him in any direction. He had fed himself upon his own grief, till the idea of any future success in life was almost unpalatable to him. But things had mended with him now, and he would see whether there might not yet be joys for him in the world. He would first see whether there might not be that one great joy which he had promised to himself.

And then there came another blow. The young Squire had resolved that he would not hunt before Christmas in the Newton country. It was felt by him and by his brother that he should abstain from doing so out of respect to the memory of his uncle, and he had declared his purpose. Of course there was neither hunting nor shooting in these days for the other Ralph. But at the end of a month the young Squire began to feel that the days went rather slowly with him, and he remembered his stud at the Moonbeam. He consulted Gregory; and the parson, though he would fain have induced his brother to remain, could not say that there was any real objection to a trip to the B and B's. Ralph would go there on the 10th of December, and be back at his own house before Christmas. When Christmas was over, the other Ralph was to leave Newton,—perhaps for ever.

The two Ralphs had become excellent friends, and when the one that was to go declared his intention of going with no intention of returning, the other pressed him warmly to think better of it, and to look upon the Priory at any rate as a second home. There were reasons why it could not be so, said the namesake; but in the close confidence of friendship which the giving and the declining of the offer generated came this further blow. They were standing together

leaning upon a gate, and looking at the exhumation of certain vast roots, as to which the trees once belonging to them had been made to fall in consequence of the improvements going on at Darvell's farm. "I don't mind telling you," said Ralph the heir, "that I hope soon to have a mistress here."

"And who is she?"

"That would be mere telling;—would it not?"

"Clarissa Underwood?" asked the unsuspecting Ralph.

There did come some prick of conscience, some qualm of an injury done, upon the young Squire as he made his answer. "No; not Clarissa;—though she is the dearest, sweetest girl that ever lived, and would make a better wife perhaps than the girl I think of."

"And who is the girl you think of?"

"She is to be found in the same house."

"You do not mean the elder sister?" said the unfortunate one. He had known well that his companion had not alluded to Patience Underwood; but in his agony he had suggested to himself that mode of escape.

"No; not Patience Underwood. Though, let me tell you, a man might do worse than marry Patience Underwood. I have always thought it a pity that Patience and Gregory would not make a match of it. He, however, would fall in love with Clary, and she has too much of the rake in her to give herself to a parson. I was thinking of Mary Bonner, who, to my mind, is the handsomest woman I ever saw in my life."

"I think she is," said Ralph, turning away his face.

"She hasn't a farthing, I fancy," continued the happy heir, "but I don't regard that now. A few months ago I had a mind to marry for money; but it isn't the sort of thing that any man should do. I have almost made up my mind to ask her. Indeed, when I tell you, I suppose I have quite made up my mind."

"She'll accept you,—of course."

"I can say nothing about that, you know. A man must take his chance. I can offer her a fine position, and a girl, I think, should have some regard to money when she marries, though a man should not. If there's nobody before me I should have a chance, I suppose."

His words were not boastful, but there was a tone of triumph in his voice. And why should he not triumph? thought the other Ralph. Of course he would triumph. He had everything to recommend him. And as for himself,—for him, the dispossessed one,—any particle of a claim which he might have secured by means of that former correspondence had been withdrawn by his own subsequent words. "I dare say she'll take you," he said, with his face still averted.

Ralph the heir did indeed think that he would be accepted, and he

went on to discuss the circumstances of their future home, almost as though Mary Bonner were already employed in getting together her wedding garments. His companion said nothing further, and Ralph the heir did not discover that anything was amiss.

On the following day Ralph the heir went across the country to the Moonbeam in Buckinghamshire.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

NEEFIT MEANS TO STICK TO IT.

THREE was some business to be done as a matter of course before the young Squire could have all his affairs properly settled. There were debts to be paid, among which Mr. Neefit's stood certainly first. It was first in magnitude, and first in obligation; but it gave Ralph no manner of uneasiness. He had really done his best to get Polly to marry him, and, luckily for him,—by the direct interposition of some divine Providence, as it now seemed to Ralph,—Polly had twice refused him. It seemed to him, indeed, that divine Providence looked after him in a special way, breaking his uncle's neck in the very nick of time, and filling a breeches-maker's daughter's mind with so sound a sense of the propriety of things, as to induce her to decline the honour of being a millstone round his neck, when positively the offer was pressed upon her. As things stood there could be no difficulty with Mr. Neefit. The money would be paid, of course, with all adjuncts of accruing interest, and Mr. Neefit should go on making breeches for him to the end of the chapter. And for raising this money he had still a remnant of the old property which he could sell, so that he need not begin by laying an ounce of encumbrance on his paternal estates. He was very clear in his mind at this period of his life that there should never be any such encumbrance in his days. That remnant of property should be sold, and Neefit, Horsball, and others, should be paid. But it certainly did occur to him in regard to Neefit, that there had been that between them which made it expedient that the matter should be settled with some greater courtesy than would be shown by a simple transaction through his man of business. Therefore he wrote a few lines to Mr. Neefit on the day before he left the Priory,—a few lines which he thought to be very civil.

“Newton, 9th December, 186—.

“MY DEAR MR. NEEFIT,—

“You have probably heard before this of the accident which has happened in my family. My uncle has been killed by a fall from

his horse, and I have come into my property earlier than I expected. As soon as I could begin to attend to matters of business, I thought of my debt to you, and of all the obligation I owe you. I think the debt is £1,000; but whatever it is it can be paid now. The money will be ready early in the year, if that will do for you,—and I am very much obliged to you. Would you mind letting Mr. Carey know how much it is, interest and all. He is our family lawyer.

"Remember me very kindly to Miss Polly. I hope she will always think of me as a friend. Would you tell Bawwah to put three pairs of breeches in hand for me,—leather.

"Yours very truly,

"RALPH NEWTON."

The wrath of Mr. Neefit on receiving this letter at his shop in Conduit Street was almost divine. He had heard from Polly an account of that last interview at Ramsgate, and Polly had told her story as truly as she knew how to tell it. But the father had never for a moment allowed himself to conceive that therefore the thing was at an end, and had instructed Polly that she was not to look upon it in that light. He regarded his young customer as absolutely bound to him, and would not acknowledge to himself that such obligation could be annulled by Polly's girlish folly. And he did believe that young Newton intended to act, as he called it, "on the square." So believing, he was ready to make almost any sacrifice of himself; but that Newton should now go back, after having received his hard money, was to him a thing quite out of the question. He scolded Polly with some violence, and asked whether she wanted to marry such a lout as Moggs. Polly replied with spirit that she wouldn't marry any man till she found that she could love him, and that the man loved her. "Ain't he told you as he loves you ever so often?" said Neefit. "I know what I'm doing of, father," said Polly, "and I'm not going to be drove." Nevertheless Mr. Neefit had felt certain that if young Newton would still act upon the square, things would settle themselves rightly. There was the money due, and, as Neefit constantly said to himself, "money was a thing as was not to be got over."

Then had come upon the tradesman the tidings of the old Squire's death. They were read to him out of a newspaper by his shopman, Waddle. "I'm blessed if he ain't been and tumbled all at once into his uncle's shoes," said Waddle. The paragraph in question was one which appeared in a weekly newspaper some two days after the Squire's death. Neefit, who at the moment was turning over the pages of his ledger, came down from his desk and stood for about ten minutes in the middle of his shop, while the Herr ceased from his cutting, and Waddle read the paragraph over and over again.

Neefit stood stock still, with his hands in his breeches pockets, and his great staring eyes fixed upon vacancy. "I'm blessed if it ain't true," said Waddle, convinced by the repetition of his own reading. News had previously reached the shop that the Squire had had a fall. Tidings as to troubles in the hunting-field were quick in reaching Mr. Neefit's shop;—but there had been no idea that the accident would prove to be fatal. Neefit, when he went home that night, told his wife and daughter. "That will be the last of young Newton," said Mrs. Neefit. "I'm d—— if it will!" said the breeches-maker. Polly maintained a discreet silence as to the heir, merely remarking that it was very sad for the old gentleman. Polly at that time was very full of admiration for Moggs,—in regard, that is, to the political character of her lover. Moggs had lost his election, but was about to petition.

Neefit was never called upon, in the way of his own trade, to make funereal garments. Men, when they are bereaved of their friends, do not ride in black breeches. But he had all a tailor's respect for a customer with a dead relation. He felt that it would not become him to make an application to the young Squire on a subject connected with marriage, till the tombstone over the old Squire should have been properly adjusted. He was a patient man, and could wait. And he was a man not good at writing letters. His customer and future son-in-law would turn up soon; or else, the expectant father-in-law might drop down upon him at the Moonbeam or elsewhere. As for a final escape, Polly Neefit's father hardly feared that any such attempt would be made. The young man had acted on the square, and had made his offer in good faith.

Such was Mr. Neefit's state of mind when he received the young Squire's letter. The letter almost knocked him down. There was a decision about it, a confidence that all was over between them except the necessary payment of the money, an absence of all doubt as to "Miss Polly," which he could not endure. And then that order for more breeches, included in the very same paragraph with Polly, was most injurious. It must be owned that the letter was a cruel, heart-rending, bad letter. For an hour or so it nearly broke Mr. Neefit's heart. But he resolved that he was not going to be done. The young Squire should marry his daughter, or the whole transaction should be published to the world. He would do such things and say such things that the young Squire should certainly not have a good time of it. He said not a word to Polly of the letter that night, but he did speak of the young Squire. "When that young man comes again, Miss Polly," he said, "I shall expect you to take him."

"I don't know anything about that, father," said Polly. "He's had his answer, and I'm thinking he won't ask for another." Upon this the breeches-maker looked at his daughter, but made no other reply.

During the two or three following days Neefit made some inquiries, and found that his customer was at the Moonbeam. It was now necessary that he should go to work at once, and, therefore, with many misgivings, he took Waddle into his confidence. He could not himself write such a letter as then must be written ;—but Waddle was perfect at the writing of letters. Waddle shrugged his shoulders, and clearly did not believe that Polly would ever get the young Squire. Waddle indeed went so far as to hint that his master would be lucky in obtaining payment of his money,—but, nevertheless, he gave his mind to the writing of the letter. The letter was written as follows :—

“Conduit Street, 14th December, 186—.

“DEAR SIR,—

“Yours of the 9th instant has come to hand, and I beg to say with compliments how shocked we were to hear of the Squire’s accident. It was terribly sudden, and we all felt it very much ; as in the way of our business we very often have to.”

“As to the money that can stand. Between friends such things needn’t be mentioned. Any accommodation of that kind was and always will be ready when required. As to that other matter, a young gentleman like you won’t think that a young lady is to be taken at her first word. A bargain is a bargain, and honourable is honourable, which nobody knows as well as you who was always disposed to be upon the square. Our Polly hasn’t forgotten you,—and isn’t going.” It should be acknowledged on Mr. Waddle’s behalf, that that last assurance was inserted by the unassisted energy of Mr. Neeft himself. “We shall expect to see you without delay, here or at Hendon, as may best suit ; but pray remember that things stand just as they was. Touching other matters, as needn’t be named here, orders will be attended to as usual if given separate.

“Yours very truly and obedient,

“THOMAS NEEFIT.”

This letter duly reached the young Squire, and did not add to his happiness at the Moonbeam. That he should ever renew his offer to Polly Neefit was, he well knew, out of the question ; but he could see before him an infinity of trouble should the breeches-maker be foolish enough to press him to do so. He had acted “on the square.” In compliance with the bargain undoubtedly made by him, he had twice proposed to Polly, and had Polly accepted his offer on either of these occasions, there would,—he now acknowledged to himself,—have been very great difficulty in escaping from the difficulty. Polly had thought fit to refuse him, and of course he was free. But, nevertheless, there might be trouble in store for him. He had hardly begun to ask himself in what way this trouble might next show itself,

when Neefit was at the Moonbeam. Three days after the receipt of his letter, when he rode into the Moonbeam yard on his return from hunting, there was Mr. Neefit waiting to receive him.

He certainly had not answered Mr. Neefit's letter, having told himself that he might best do so by a personal visit in Conduit Street; but now that Neefit was there, the personal intercourse did not seem to him to be so easy. He greeted the breeches-maker very warmly, while Pepper, Cox, and Mr. Horsball, with sundry grooms and helpers, stood by and admired. Something of Mr. Neefit's money, and of Polly's charms as connected with the young Squire, had already reached the Moonbeam by the tongue of Rumour; and now Mr. Neefit had been waiting for the last four hours in the little parlour within the Moonbeam bar. He had eaten his mutton chop, and drunk three or four glasses of gin and water, but had said nothing of his mission. Mrs. Horsball, however, had already whispered her suspicions to her husband's sister, a young lady of forty, who dispensed rum, gin, and brandy, with very long ringlets and very small glasses.

"You want to have a few words with me, old fellow," said Ralph to the breeches-maker, with a cheery laugh. It was a happy idea that of making them all around conceive that Neefit had come after his money. Only it was not successful. Men are not dunned so rigorously when they have just fallen into their fortunes. Neefit, hardly speaking above his breath, with that owlish, stolid look, which was always common to him except when he was measuring a man for a pair of breeches, acknowledged that he did. "Come along, old fellow," said Ralph, taking him by the arm. "But what'll you take to drink first?" Neefit shook his head, and accompanied Ralph into the house. Ralph had a private sitting-room of his own, so that there was no difficulty on that score. "What's all this about?" he said, standing with his back to the fire, and still holding Neefit by the arm. He did it very well, but he did not as yet know the depth of Neefit's obstinacy.

"What's it all about?" asked Neefit in disgust.

"Well; yes. Have you talked to Polly herself about this, old fellow?"

"No, I ain't; and I don't mean."

"Twice I went to her, and twice she refused me. Come, Neefit, be reasonable. A man can't be running after a girl all his life, when she won't have anything to say to him. I did all that a man could do; and upon my honour I was very fond of her. But, God bless my soul,—there must be an end to everything."

"There ain't to be no end to this, Mr. Newton."

"I'm to marry the girl whether she will or not?"

"Nohow," said Mr. Neefit, oracularly. "But when a young

gentleman asks a young lady as whether she'll have him, she's not a-going to jump down his throat. You knows that, Mr. Newton. And as for money, did I ask for any settlement? I'd a' been ashamed to mention money. When are you a-coming to see our Polly, that's the question?"

"I shall come no more, Mr. Neefit."

"You won't?"

"Certainly not, Mr. Neefit. I've been twice rejected."

"And that's the kind of man you are; is it? You're one of them sort, are you?" Then he looked out of his saucer eyes upon the young Squire with a fishy ferocity, which was very unpleasant. It was quite evident that he meant war. "If that's your game, Mr. Newton, I'll be even with you."

"Mr. Neefit, I'll pay you anything that you say I owe you."

"Damn your money!" said the breeches-maker, walking out of the room. When he got down into the bar he told them all there that young Newton was engaged to his daughter, and that, by G——, he should marry her.

"Stick to that, Neefit," said Lieutenant Cox.

"I mean to stick to it," said Mr. Neefit. He then ordered another glass of gin and water, and was driven back to the station.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"HE MUST MARRY HER."

ON the day following that on which Mr. Neefit made his journey to the Moonbeam, Sir Thomas Underwood was at his chambers in London. It was now eight weeks since his bone had been broken, and though he still carried his arm in a sling, he declared of himself that he was able to go about as usual;—which assertion was taken at the villa as meaning that he was now able to live in Southampton Buildings without further assistance from women. When Patience reminded him, with tears in her eyes, that he could not as yet put on his own coat, he reminded her that Stemm was the most careful of men. Up to London he went with a full understanding that he was not at any rate to be expected home on that night. He had business on hand of great importance, which, as he declared, made his presence in town imperative. Mr. Trigger, from Percycross, was to be up with reference to the pestilent petition which had been presented against the return of Griffenbottom and himself. Moggs had petitioned on his own behalf, and two of the Liberals of the borough had also petitioned in the interest of Mr. Westmacott. The two Liberal

parties who had quarrelled during the contest had now again joined forces in reference to the petition, and there was no doubt that the matter would go on before the judge. Mr. Trigger was coming up to London with reference to the defence. Sir Thomas gave Stemm to understand that Mr. Trigger would call at one o'clock.

Exactly at one o'clock the bell was rung at Sir Thomas's outside door, and Stemm was on the alert to give entrance to Mr. Trigger. When the door was opened who should present himself but our unfortunate friend Neefit. He humbly asked whether Sir Thomas was within, and received a reply which, as coming from Stemm, was courteous in the extreme. "Mr. Trigger, I suppose;—walk in, Mr. Trigger." Neefit, not at all understanding why he was called Trigger, did walk in. Stemm, opening the door of his master's sanctum, announced Mr. Trigger. Neefit advanced into the middle of the room. Sir Thomas, with some solicitude as to the adjustment of his arm, rose to greet his agent from Pereycross. "This isn't Mr. Trigger," said Sir Thomas. "He told me he was, anyhow," said Stemm. "I didn't tell you nothing of the kind," said Neefit. "But you come from Pereycross?" said Sir Thomas. "No, I don't; I comes from Conduit Street," said Neefit. "You must go away," said Stemm, leaving the door open, and advancing into the room as though to turn the enemy's flank.

But Neefit, having made good his point so far, did not intend to be dislodged without a struggle on his own part. "I've something to say to Sir Thomas about Mr. Newton, as I wants to say very particular." "You can't say it now," said Stemm. "Oh, but I can," said Neefit, "and it won't take three minutes. "Wouldn't another day do for it, as I am particularly busy now?" pleaded Sir Thomas. "Well, Sir Thomas;—to tell the truth, it wouldn't," said Mr. Neefit, standing his ground. Then there came another ring at the bell. "Ask Mr. Trigger to sit down in the other room for two minutes, Stemm," said Sir Thomas. And so Mr. Neefit had carried his point. "And now, sir," said Sir Thomas, "as I am particularly engaged, I will ask you to be as quick as possible."

"My name is Neefit," began the breeches-maker,—and then paused. Sir Thomas, who had heard the name from Ralph, but had forgotten it altogether, merely bowed his head. "I am the breeches-maker of Conduit Street," continued Mr. Neefit, with a proud conviction that he too had ascended so high in his calling as to be justified in presuming that he was known to mankind. Sir Thomas again bowed. Neefit went on with his story. "Mr. Newton is a-going to behave to me very bad."

"If he owes you money, he can pay you now," said Sir Thomas.

"He do owe me money;—a thousand pound he owe me."

"A thousand pounds for breeches!"

"No, Sir Thomas. It's most for money lent; but it's not along of that as I'd trouble you. I know how to get my money, or to put up with the loss if I don't. A thousand pound ain't here nor there,—not in what I've got to say. I wouldn't demean myself to ring at your bell, Sir Thomas;—not in the way of looking for a thousand pounds."

"In God's name, then, what is it? Pray be quick."

"He's going back from his word as he's promised to my daughter. That's what it is." As Neefit paused again, Sir Thomas remembered Ralph's proposition, made in his difficulties, as to marrying a tradesman's daughter for money, and at once fell to the conclusion that Mr. and Miss Neefit had been ill-used. "Sir Thomas," continued the breeches-maker, "I've been as good as a father to him. I gave him money when nobody else wouldn't."

"Do you mean that he has had money from you?"

"Yes; in course he has; ever so much. I paid for him a lot of money to 'Orsbull, where he 'unts. Money! I should think so. Didn't I pay Mogg's for him, the bootmaker? The very money as is rattling in his pocket now is my money."

"And he engaged himself to your daughter?"

"He engaged hisself to me to marry her. He won't say no otherwise himself. And he asked her twice. Why, Sir Thomas, he was all on the square about it till the old gentleman broke his neck. He hadn't nowhere else to go to for a shilling. But now the estate's come in like, he's for behaving dishonourable. He don't know me yet; that's what he don't. But I'll make him know me, Sir Thomas."

Then the door was opened, and Stemm's head appeared. "Mr. Trigger says as he's in the greatest possible haste, Sir Thomas." The reader, however, may as well be informed that this was pure invention on the part of Mr. Stemm.

Sir Thomas tore his hair and rubbed his face. He couldn't bid Neefit to call again, as he certainly did not desire to have a second visit. "What can I do for you, Mr. Neefit? I have no doubt the money will be paid, if owing. I will guarantee that for you."

"It ain't the money. I knows how to get my money."

"Then what can I do for you?"

"Make him go upon the square, Sir Thomas."

"How can I make him? He's twenty-six years old, and he's nothing to me. I don't think he should marry the young lady. He's not in her rank of life. If he has done her an injury, he must pay for it."

"Injury!" shouted Neefit, upon whose mind the word produced an unintended idea. "No, no! Our Polly ain't like that. By G——, I'd eat him, if it was that way! There ain't a duchess in the land as 'd 've guv' him his answer more ready than Polly had he ever spoke to her that way."

"If he has given rise to hopes which through him will be disappointed," said Sir Thomas, gravely, "he is bound to make what compensation may be in his power."

"Compensation be d——!" said Neefit. "He must marry her."

"I don't think he will do that."

"You didn't think he would take my money, I suppose; but he did. You didn't think he'd come and spend his Sundays out at my cottage, but he did. You didn't think as he'd come after our Polly down to Ramsgate, but he did. You didn't think as he'd give me his word to make her his wife, but he did." At every assertion that he made, the breeches-maker bobbed forward his bullet head, stretched open his eyes, and stuck out his under lip. During all this excited energy, he was not a man pleasant to the eye. "And now how is it to be, Sir Thomas? That's what I want to know."

"Mr. Newton is nothing to me, Mr. Neefit."

"Oh;—that's all. Nothing to you, ain't he? Wasn't he brought up by you just as a son like? And now he ain't nothing to you! Do you mean to say as he didn't ought to marry my girl?"

"I think he ought not to marry her."

"Not arter his promise?"

Sir Thomas was driven very hard, whereas had the sly old breeches-maker told all his story, there would have been no difficulty at all. "I think such a marriage would lead to the happiness of neither party. If an injury has been done,—as I fear may be too probable,—I will advise my young friend to make any reparation in his power—short of marriage. I can say nothing further, Mr. Neefit."

"And that's your idea of being on the square, Sir Thomas?"

"I can say nothing further, Mr. Neefit. As I have an appointment made, I must ask you to leave me." As Sir Thomas said this, his hand was upon the bell.

"Very well;—very well. As sure as my name's Neefit, he shall hear of me. And so shall you, Sir Thomas. Don't you be poking at me in that way, old fellow. I don't choose to be poked at." These last words were addressed to Stemmm, who had entered the room, and was holding the door open for Mr. Neefit's exit with something more than the energy customary in speeding a parting guest. Mr. Neefit, however, did take his departure, and Sir Thomas joined Mr. Trigger in the other room.

We will not be present at that interview. Sir Thomas had been in a great hurry to get rid of Mr. Neefit, but it may be doubted whether he found Mr. Trigger much better company. Mr. Trigger's business chiefly consisted in asking Sir Thomas for a considerable sum of money, and in explaining to him that the petition would certainly cost a large sum beyond this,—unless the expenses could be

saddled on Westmacott and Moggs, as to which result Mr. Trigger seemed to have considerable doubt. But perhaps the bitterest part of Mr. Trigger's communication consisted in the expression of his opinion that Mr. Griffenbottom should be held by Sir Thomas free from any expense as to the petition, on the ground that Griffenbottom, had he stood alone, would certainly have carried one of the seats without any fear of a petition. "I don't think I can undertake that, Mr. Trigger," said Sir Thomas. Mr. Trigger simply shrugged his shoulders.

Sir Thomas, when he was alone, was very uncomfortable. While at Pereycross he had extracted from Patience an idea that Ralph the heir and Clarissa were attached to each other, and he had very strongly declared that he would not admit an engagement between them. At that time Ralph was supposed to have sold his inheritance, and did not stand well in Sir Thomas's eyes. Then had come the Squire's death and the altered position of his late ward. Sir Thomas would be injured, would be made subject to unjust reproach if it were thought of him that he would be willing to give his daughter to a young man simply because that young man owned an estate. He had no such sordid feeling in regard to his girls. But he did feel that all that had occurred at Newton had made a great difference. Ralph would now live at the Priory, and there would be enough even for his extravagance. Should the Squire of Newton ask him for his girl's hand with that girl's consent, he thought that he could hardly refuse it. How could he ask Clarissa to abandon so much seeming happiness because the man had failed to keep out of debt upon a small income? He could not do so. And then it came to pass that he was prepared to admit Ralph as a suitor to his child should Ralph renew his request to that effect. They had all loved the lad as a boy, and the property was wholly unencumbered. Of course he said nothing to Clarissa; but should Ralph come to him there could be but one answer. Such had been the state of his mind before Mr. Neefit's visit.

But the breeches-maker's tale had altered the aspect of things very greatly. Under no circumstances could Sir Thomas recommend the young Squire to marry the daughter of the man who had been with him; but if Ralph Newton had really engaged himself to this girl, and had done so with the purport of borrowing money from the father, that might be a reason why, notwithstanding the splendour of his prospects, he should not be admitted to further intimacy at the villa. To borrow money from one's tradesman was, in the eyes of Sir Thomas, about as inexcusable an offence as a young man could commit. He was too much disturbed in mind to go home on the following day, but on the Thursday he returned to the villa. The following Sunday would be Christmas Day.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

FOR TWO REASONS.

THE young Squire, as soon as Neefit had left him in his own sitting-room at the Moonbeam, sat himself down and began to think over his affairs seriously. One thing was certain to him ;—nothing on earth should induce him to offer his hand again to Polly Neefit. He had had a most miraculous escape, and assuredly would run no further risk in that direction. But though he had escaped, he could perceive that there was considerable trouble before him,—considerable trouble and perhaps some disgrace. It certainly could not be proved against him that he had broken any promise, as there had been no engagement; but it could be made public that he had twice offered himself to Polly, and could also be made public that he had borrowed the breeches-maker's money. He kept himself alone on that evening; and though he hunted on the following day, he was not found to be a lively companion either by Cox or Pepper. The lieutenant was talking about Neefit and Neefit's daughter all day: but Mr. Pepper, who was more discreet, declined to canvass the subject. "It's nothing to me who a man marries and who he don't," said Mr. Pepper. "What sort of horses he rides ;—that's what I look at." During this day and the next Ralph did consider the state of his affairs very closely, and the conclusion he came to was this, that the sooner he could engage himself to marry Mary Bonner the better. If he were once engaged, the engagement would not then be broken off because of any previous folly with Miss Neefit; and, again, if he were once engaged to Mary Bonner, Neefit would see the absurdity of torturing him further in regard to Polly. On the Wednesday evening he went up to town, and on the Thursday morning he put himself into a cab and ordered the man to drive him to Popham Villa.

It was about noon when he started from town; and though he never hesitated,—did not pause for a moment after he had made up his mind as to the thing that he would do, still he felt many misgivings as he was driven down to Fulham. How should he begin his story to Mary Bonner, and how should he look Clary Underwood in the face? And yet he had not an idea that he was in truth going to behave badly to Clarissa. There had no doubt been a sort of tenderness in the feeling that had existed between them,—a something just a little warmer than brotherly regard. They had been thrown together and had liked each other. And as he was driven nearer to the villa, he remembered distinctly that he had kissed her

on the lawn. But did any one suppose that a man was bound to marry the first girl he kissed,—or if not the first, then why the second, or the third? Clarissa could have no fair ground of complaint against him; and yet he was uneasy as he reflected that she too must know the purport of his present visit to the villa.

And he was not quite easy about Mary. The good things which he carried in his hand were so many that he did not conceive that Mary would refuse him; but yet he wished that the offer had been made, and had been accepted. Hitherto he had taken pleasure in his intercourse with young ladies, and had rather enjoyed the excitement of those moments which to some men are troublesome and even painful. When he had told Clarissa that she was dearer than any one else, he had been very happy while he was telling her. There had been nothing of embarrassment to him in the work of proposing to Polly Neefit. There may perhaps have been other passages in his life of the same nature, and he certainly had not feared them beforehand or been ashamed of them afterwards. But now he found himself endeavouring to think what words he would use to Mary Bonner, and in what attitude he would stand or sit as he used them. "The truth is," he said to himself, "a man should do these kind of things without premeditation." But not the less was he resolved, and at the gate he jumped out of his cab with a determination to have it over as soon as possible. He desired the cabman to wait for him at the nearest stables, remarking that he might be there for a few minutes, or for a few hours, and then turned to the gate. As he did so, he saw Sir Thomas walking from the direction of Fulham Bridge. Sir Thomas had come down by the railway on the other side of the river, and was now walking home. A sudden thought struck the young Squire. He would begin his work by telling his tale to Sir Thomas. There could be nothing so fitting as that he should obtain the uncle's leave to address the niece.

The two men greeted each other, and there were many things to be said. Sir Thomas had not seen his ward since the old Squire's death, and Ralph had not seen Sir Thomas since the election at Percycross and the accident of the broken arm. Sir Thomas was by far too reticent, too timid, and too reflective a man to begin at once whatever observations he might have to make ultimately in regard to Miss Polly Neefit. He was somewhat slow of speech, unless specially aroused, and had hardly received the congratulations of his young friend respecting the election, and expressed with some difficult decency his sorrow for the old Squire's death as combined with his satisfaction that the estate had not been sacrificed, when Ralph stopped him just as they had reached the front door, and, with much solemnity of manner, declared his wish to make a very particular private communication

to Sir Thomas. "Certainly," said Sir Thomas, "certainly. Come into my room." But there was some delay before this privacy could be achieved, for in the hall they were met by the three girls, and of course there were many things to be said by them. Clarissa could hardly repress the flutter of her heart. When the reader last saw her flutter, and last heard her words as she spoke of her love to her cousin, she was taking an opportunity of declaring to Mary Bonner that she did not begrudge the brilliance of Mary's present prospects, —though the grand estate which made them brilliant was in a measure taken from her own hopes. And she had owned at the same time that she did not dare to feel confidence in her own love, because her lover would now be too poor in his own esteem to indulge himself with the luxury of a wife. All this Mary had accepted from her, certainly with no expression of triumph, but certainly with some triumph in her heart. Now this was entirely changed,—and here was her lover, with his fortune restored to him, once more beneath her father's roof! She gave him her hand the first of the three. She could not repress herself. He took it with a smile, and pressed it warmly. But he turned to Patience and took hers as rapidly as he was able. Then came Mary's turn. "I hope you also are glad to see me once again?" he said. Clarissa's heart sank within her as she heard the words. The appreciation of a woman in such matters is as fine as the nose of a hound, and is all but unintelligible to a man. "Oh, yes, Mr. Newton," said Mary smiling. "But if he asks her, she'll take him." No such words as these were formed even in Clarissa's mind; but after some fashion such was the ejaculation of her heart. Mary's "Oh, yes," had meant little enough, but could Mary withstand such chances if they were offered to her?

Sir Thomas led the way into his private room, and Ralph followed him. "You won't be long, papa," said Patience.

"I hope not," said Sir Thomas.

"Remember, Ralph, you will be keeping lunch waiting," said Patience.

Then the two men were alone. Sir Thomas's mind had recurred to Neefit at the first moment of Ralph's request. The young man was going to consult him as to the best mode of getting rid of that embarrassment. But in the hall another idea had come upon him. He was to be asked for his consent regarding Clarissa. As he seated himself in one chair and asked Ralph to take another, he had not quite made up his mind as to the answer he would give. There must at any rate be some delay. The reader will of course remember that Sir Thomas was persuaded that Ralph had engaged himself to marry Polly Neefit.

Ralph rushed boldly at his subject at once. "Sir Thomas," he said, "I am going to make a proposition, and I wish to ask you

for your consent. I have made up my mind that the sooner I marry in my present condition the better." Sir Thomas smiled and assented. "And I want to know whether you will object to my asking Miss Bonner to be my wife."

"Miss Bonner!" said Sir Thomas, throwing up both his hands.

"Yes, sir;—is there any objection on your part?"

Sir Thomas hardly knew how to say whether there was or was not an objection on his part. In the first place he had made up his mind that the other Ralph was to marry Mary,—that he would do so in spite of that disclaimer which had been made in the first moment of the young man's disinheritance. He, Sir Thomas, however, could have no right to object on that score. Nor could he raise any objection on the score of Clarissa. It did seem to him that all the young people were at cross purposes, that Patience must have been very stupid and Clarissa most addlepated, or else that this Ralph was abominably false; but still, he could say nothing respecting that. No tale had reached his ears which made it even possible for him to refer to Clarissa. But yet he was dissatisfied with the man, and was disposed to show it. "Perhaps I ought to tell you," said Sir Thomas, "that a man calling himself Neefit was with me yesterday."

"Oh, yes; the breeches-maker."

"I believe he said that such was his trade. He assured me that you had borrowed large sums of money from him."

"I do owe him some money."

"A thousand pounds, I think he said."

"Certainly as much as that."

"Not for breeches,—which I suppose would be impossible, but for money advanced."

"Part one and part the other," said Ralph.

"And he went on to tell me that you were engaged,—to marry his daughter."

"That is untrue."

"Were you never engaged to her?"

"I was never engaged to her, Sir Thomas."

"And it was all a lie on the part of Mr. Neefit? Was there no foundation for it? You had told me yourself that you thought of such a marriage."

"There is nothing to justify him in saying that I was ever engaged to the young lady. The truth is that I did ask her and she,—refused me."

"You did ask her?"

"I did ask her," said Ralph.

"In earnest?"

"Well; yes;—certainly in earnest. At that time I thought it the only way to save the property. I need not tell you how wretched I

was at the time. You will remember what you yourself had said to me. It is true that I asked her, and that I did so by agreement with her father. She refused me,—twice. She was so good, so sensible, and so true, that she knew she had better not make herself a party to such a bargain. Whatever you may think of my own conduct I shall not have behaved badly to Miss Neefit."

Sir Thomas did think very ill of Ralph's conduct, but he believed him. After a while the whole truth came out, as to the money lent and as to Neefit's schemes. It was of course understood by both of them that Ralph was required neither by honesty nor by honour to renew his offer. And then under such circumstances was he or was he not to be allowed to propose to Mary Bonner? At first Ralph had been much dismayed at having the Neefit mine sprung on him at such a moment; but he collected himself very quickly, and renewed his demand as to Mary. Sir Thomas could not mean to say that because he had been foolish in regard to Polly Neefit, that therefore he was to be debarred from marrying! Sir Thomas did not exactly say that; but, nevertheless, Sir Thomas showed his displeasure. "It seems," said he, "particularly easy to you to transfer your affections."

"My affection for Miss Neefit was not strong," said Ralph. "I did, and always shall, regard her as a most excellent young woman."

"She showed her sense in refusing you," said Sir Thomas.

"I think she did," said Ralph.

"And I doubt much whether my niece will not be equally—sensible."

"Ah,—I can say nothing as to that."

"Were she to hear this story of Miss Neefit I am sure she would refuse you."

"But you would not tell it to her,—as yet! If all goes well with me I will tell it to her some day. Come, Sir Thomas, you don't mean to be hard upon me at last. It cannot be that you should really regret that I have got out of that trouble."

"But I regret much that you should have borrowed a tradesman's money, and more that you should have offered to pay the debt by marrying his daughter." Through it all, however, there was a feeling present to Sir Thomas that he was, in truth, angry with the Squire of Newton, not so much for his misconduct in coming to propose to Mary so soon after the affair with Polly Neefit, but because he had not come to propose to Clarissa. And Sir Thomas knew that such a feeling, if it did really exist, must be overcome. Mary was entitled to her chance, and must make the best of it. He would not refuse his sanction to a marriage with his niece on account of Ralph's misconduct, when he would have sanctioned a marriage with his own daughter in spite of that misconduct. The conversation was ended

by Sir Thomas leaving the room with a promise that Miss Bonner should be sent to fill his place. In five minutes Miss Bonner was there. She entered the room very slowly, with a countenance that was almost savage, and during the few minutes that she remained there she did not sit down.

"Sir Thomas has told you why I am here?" he said, advancing towards her, and taking her hand.

"No; that is;—no. He has not told me."

"Mary—"

"Mr. Newton, my name is Miss Bonner."

"And must it between us be so cold as that?" He still had her by the hand, which she did not at the moment attempt to withdraw. "I have come to tell you, at the first moment that was possible to me after my uncle's death, that of all women in the world I love you the best."

Then she withdrew her hand. "Mr. Newton, I am sorry to hear you say so;—very sorry."

"Why should you be sorry? If you are unkind to me like this, there may be reason why I should be sorry. I shall, indeed, be very sorry. Since I first saw you, I have hoped that you would be my wife."

"I never can be your wife, Mr. Newton."

"Why not? Have I done anything to offend you? Being here as one of the family you must know enough of my affairs to feel sure,—that I have come to you the first moment that was possible. I did not dare to come when I thought that my position was one that was not worthy of you."

"It would have been the same at any time," said Mary.

"And why should you reject me,—like this; without a moment's thought?"

"For two reasons," said Mary, slowly, and then she paused, as though doubting whether she would continue her speech, or give the two reasons which now guided her. But he stood, looking into her face, waiting for them. "In the first place," she said, "I think you are untrue to another person." Then she paused again, as though asking herself whether that reason would not suffice. But she resolved that she would be bold, and give the other. "In the next place, my heart is not my own to give."

"Is it so?" asked Ralph.

"I have said as much as can be necessary,—perhaps more, and I would rather go now." Then she left the room with the same slow, stately step, and he saw her no more on that day.

Then in those short five minutes Sir Thomas had absolutely told her the whole story about Polly Neefit, and she had come to the conclusion that because in his trouble he had offered to marry a

tradesman's daughter, therefore he was to be debarred from ever receiving the hand of a lady ! That was the light in which he looked upon Mary's first announcement. As to the second announcement he was absolutely at a loss. There must probably, he thought, have been some engagement before she left Jamaica. Not the less on that account was it an act of unpardonable ill-nature on the part of Sir Thomas,—that telling of Polly Neefit's story to Mary Bonner at such a moment.

He was left alone for a few minutes after Mary's departure, and then Patience came to him. Would he stay for dinner ? Even Patience was very cold to him. Sir Thomas was fatigued and was lying down, but would see him, of course, if he wished it. "And where is Clarissa ?" asked Ralph. Patience said that Clarissa was not very well. She also was lying down. "I see what it is," said Ralph, turning upon her angrily. " You are, all of you, determined to quarrel with me because of my uncle's death."

" I do not see why that should make us quarrel," said Patience. " I do not know that any one has quarrelled with you."

Of course he would not wait for dinner, nor would he have any lunch. He walked out on to the lawn with something of a bluster in his step, and stood there for three or four minutes looking up at the house and speaking to Patience. A young man when he has been rejected by one of the young ladies of a family has rather a hard time of it till he gets away. " Well, Patience," he said at last, " make my farewells for me." And then he was gone.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

HORSELEECHES.

THE honour of representing the borough of Percy-cross in Parliament was very great, and Sir Thomas, no doubt, did enjoy it after a fashion; but it was by no means an unalloyed pleasure. While he was still in bed with his broken arm at the Percy Standard, many applications for money had been made to him. This man wanted a sovereign, that man a five-pound-note, and some poor starving wretch a half-a-crown; and they all came to him with notes from Trigger, or messages from Spicer or Spiveycomb, to the effect that as the election was now over, the money ought to be given. The landlord of the Percy Standard was on such occasions very hard upon him. "It really will do good, Sir Thomas." "It is wanted, Sir Thomas." "It will make a good feeling in the town, Sir Thomas, and we don't know how soon we may have to go to work again." Sir Thomas was too weak in health to refuse. He gave the sovereigns, the five-pound-notes, and the half-crowns, and hurried back home as quickly as he was able.

But things were almost worse with him at home than at Percy-cross. The real horseleeches felt that they could hardly get a good hold of him while he was lying at the Percy-cross inn. Attacks by letter were, they well knew, more fatal than those made personally, and they waited. The first that came was from Mr. Pabsby. Mr. Pabsby had at last seen his way clear, and had voted for Underwood and Westmacott, absolutely throwing away his vote as far as the cause was concerned. But Mr. Pabsby had quarrelled with Griffen-bottom, who once, when pressed hard for some favours, had answered the reverend gentleman somewhat roughly. "You may go and be —," said Mr. Griffenbottom in his wrath, "and tell everybody in Percy-cross that I said so." Mr. Pabsby had smiled, had gone away, and had now voted for Mr. Westmacott. Mr. Pabsby was indeed a horseleech of the severest kind. There had been some outward show of reconciliation between Griffenbottom and Pabsby; but Pabsby had at last voted for Underwood and Westmacott. Sir Thomas had not been home two days before he received a letter from Mr. Pabsby. "It had been with infinite satisfaction,"—so Mr. Pabsby now said,—"that he had at length seen his way clearly, and found himself able to support his friend Sir Thomas. And he believed that he might take upon himself to say that when he once had seen his way clearly, he had put his shoulder to the wheel gallantly." In fact, it was to be inferred from the contents of Mr.

Pabsby's letter that Sir Thomas's return had been due altogether to Mr. Pabsby's flock, who had, so said Mr. Pabsby, been guided in the matter altogether by his advice. Then he sent a list of his "hearers," who had voted for Sir Thomas. From this the slight change of subject needed to bring him to the new chapel which he was building, and his desire that Sir Thomas should head the subscription-list in so good a cause, was easy enough. It might be difficult to say in what Mr. Pabsby's strength lay, but it certainly was the case that the letter was so written as to defy neglect and almost to defy refusal. Such is the power of horseleeches. Sir Thomas sent Mr. Pabsby a cheque for twenty pounds, and received Mr. Pabsby's acknowledgment, thanking him for his "first" subscription. The thanks were not very cordial, and it was evident that Mr. Pabsby had expected a good deal more than twenty pounds in return for all that he had done.

Mr. Pabsby was simply the first. Before Christmas had come, it seemed to Sir Thomas that there was not a place of divine worship in the whole of Pereyecross that was not falling to the ground in ruins. He had not observed it when he was there, but now it appeared that funds were wanted for almost every such edifice in the borough. And the schools were in a most destitute condition. He was informed that the sitting member had always subscribed to all the schools, and that if he did not continue such subscription the children would literally be robbed of their education. One gentleman, whose name he did not even remember to have heard, simply suggested to him that he would, as a matter of course, continue to give "the £50" towards the general Christmas collection on behalf of the old women of the borough. The sitting members had given it time out of mind. Mr. Roodiland had a political project of his own, which in fact, if carried out, would amount to a prohibition on the import of French boots, and suggested that Sir Thomas should bring in a bill to that effect on the meeting of Parliament. If Sir Thomas would not object to the trouble of visiting Amiens, Lille, Beauvais, and three or four other French towns which Mr. Roodilands mentioned, he would be able to ascertain how much injury had been done to Pereyecross by the Cobden treaty. Mr. Spiveycomb had his own ideas about Italian rags,—Mr. Spiveycomb being in the paper line,—and wrote a very long letter to Sir Thomas, praying the member to make himself master of a subject so vitally important to the borough which he represented. Mr. Spicer also communicated to him the astounding fact that some high official connected with the army was undoubtedly misbehaving himself in regard to mustard for the troops. The mustard contracts were not open as they should be open. The mustard was all supplied by a London house, and Mr. Spicer was very anxious that Sir Thomas should move for a com-

mittee to inquire of the members of that London firm as to the manner in which the contracts were obtained by them. Mr. Spicer was disposed to think that this was the most important matter that would be brought forward in the next session of Parliament.

Mr. Pabsby had got his cheque before the other applications were received; but when they came in shoals, Sir Thomas thought that it might be well to refer them to Mr. Trigger for advice. Sir Thomas had not loved Griffenbottom during the election, and was not inclined to ask his colleague for counsel. Griffenbottom had obtained a name for liberality in Pereycross, and had shown symptoms,—so thought Sir Thomas,—of an intention to use his reputation as a means of throwing off further burdens from his own shoulders. "I have spent a treasure in the borough. Let my colleague begin now." Words spoken by Mr. Griffenbottom in that strain had been repeated to Sir Thomas; and, after many such words, Sir Thomas could not go to Mr. Griffenbottom for advice as to what he should give, or refuse to give. He doubted whether better reliance could be placed on Mr. Trigger;—but to some one he must go for direction. Were he once to let it be known in Pereycross that demands made would be satisfied, he might sign cheques to the extent of his whole fortune, during his first session. He did write to Mr. Trigger, enclosing the various Pereycross applications; and Mr. Trigger duly replied to him. Mr. Trigger regretted that money had been given to Mr. Pabsby. Mr. Pabsby had been of no use, and could be of no use. Mr. Griffenbottom, who knew the borough better than any one else, had understood this well when on one occasion he had been "a little short" with Mr. Pabsby. Sir Thomas ought not to have sent that cheque to Mr. Pabsby. The sending it would do infinite harm, and cause dissensions in the borough, which might require a considerable expenditure to set right. As to the other clerical demands, it seemed to Sir Thomas that Mr. Trigger was of opinion that they should all be gratified. He had, in fact, sent his money to the only person in Pereycross who ought not to have received money. The £50 for the old women was a matter of course, and would not be begrimed, as it was the only payment which was absolutely annual. In regard to the schools, Sir Thomas could do what he pleased; but the sitting members had always been liberal to the schools. Schools were things to which sitting members were, no doubt, expected to subscribe. As to the question of French boots, Mr. Trigger thought that there was something in it, and said that if Sir Thomas could devote his Christmas holidays to getting up the subject in Lille and Amiens, it would have a good effect in the borough, and show that he was in earnest. This might be the more desirable, as there was no knowing as yet what might be done about the petition. There no doubt was a strong feeling in the borough as to the Cobden treaty, and Sir

Thomas would probably feel it to be his duty to get the question up. In regard to the mustard, Mr. Trigger suggested that though there was probably nothing in it, it might be as well to ask the Secretary at War a question or two on the subject. Mr. Spicer was, no doubt, a moving man in Pereycross. Sir Thomas could at any rate promise that he would ask such questions, as Mr. Spicer certainly had friends who might be conducive to the withdrawal of the petition. Sir Thomas could at any rate put himself into correspondence with the War Office. Mr. Trigger also thought that Sir Thomas might judiciously study the subject of Italian rags, in reference to the great paper trade of the country. No doubt the manufacture of paper was a growing business at Pereycross. Mr. Trigger returned all the applications, and ended his letter by hinting that the cheques might as well be sent at once. Mr. Trigger thought that "a little money about the borough," would do good at the present moment.

It need hardly be said that this view of things was not pleasant to the sitting member, who was still confined to his house at Fulham by an arm broken in the cause. Sir Thomas had at once sent the £50 towards the Christmas festivities for the poor of the borough, and had declared his purpose of considering the other matters. Then had come a further letter from Mr. Trigger, announcing his journey to London, and Mr. Trigger and Sir Thomas had their first meeting after the election, immediately upon Mr. Neefit's departure from the chambers. "And is it to be?" asked Stemm, as soon as he had closed the door behind Mr. Trigger's back.

"Is what to be?"

"Them petitions, Sir Thomas? Petitions costs a deal of money they tell me, Sir Thomas." Sir Thomas winced. "I suppose you must go on now as your hand is in," continued Stemm.

"I don't know that at all," said Sir Thomas.

"You'll find as you must. There ain't no way out of it;—not now as you are the sitting member."

"I am not going to ruin myself, Stemm, for the sake of a seat in Parliament."

"I don't know how that may be, Sir Thomas. I hope not, Sir Thomas. But I don't see how you're not to go on now, Sir Thomas. If it wasn't for petitions, one wouldn't mind."

"There must be petitions, of course; and if there be good cause for them, they should succeed."

"No doubt, Sir Thomas. They say the bribery at Pereycross was tremenjous;—but I suppose it was on the other side."

"If it was on our side, Stemm, it was not so with my knowledge. I did all I could to prevent it. I spoke against it whenever I opened my mouth. I would not have given a shilling for a single vote, though it would have got me the election."

"But they were not all that way, Sir Thomas;—was they?"

"How can I tell? No;—I know that they were not. I fear they were not. I cannot say that money was given, but I fear it."

"You must go on now, Sir Thomas, any way," said Stemm with a groan that was not reassuring.

"I wish I had never heard the name of Percycross," said Sir Thomas.

"I dare say," replied Stemm.

"I went there determined to keep my hands clean."

"When one puts one's hand into other people's business, they won't come out clean," said the judicious Stemm. "But you must go on with it now, any way, Sir Thomas."

"I don't know what I shall do," said the unhappy member.

On the next morning there came another application from Percycross. The postmaster in that town had died suddenly, and the competitors for the situation, which was worth about £150 per annum, were very numerous. There was a certain Mr. O'Blather, only known in Percycross as cousin to one Mrs. Givantake, the wife of a liberal solicitor in the borough. Of Mr. O'Blather the worst that could be said was that at the age of forty he had no income on which to support himself. Mrs. Givantake was attached to her cousin, and Mr. Givantake had become sensible of a burden. That the vacant office was just the thing for him appeared at a glance to all his friends. Mrs. Givantake, in her energy on the subject, expressed an opinion that the whole Cabinet should be impeached if the just claims of Mr. O'Blather were not conceded. But it was felt that the justice of the claims would not prevail without personal interest. The liberal party was in power, and application, hot and instant, was made to Mr. Westmacott. Mr. Westmacott was happy enough to have his answer ready. The Treasury had nothing to do with the matter. It was a Post Office concern; and he, simply as the late liberal member, and last liberal candidate for the borough, was not entitled to intrude, even in a matter of patronage, upon the Postmaster-General, with whom he was not acquainted. But Mr. Westmacott was malicious as well as secure. He added a postscript to his letter, in which he said that he believed the present sitting member, Sir Thomas Underwood, was intimately acquainted with the noble lord who presided at the Post Office. There were various interests at Percycross moved, brought together, weighed against each other, and balanced to a grain, and finally dovetailed. If Sir Thomas Underwood would prevail on Lord — to appoint Mr. O'Blather to the vacant office, then all the Givantake influence at Percycross should be used towards the withdrawal of the petition. Such was the communication now made to Sir Thomas by a gentleman who signed his name as Peter Piper, and who professed himself authorised to act on behalf of Mr. Givantake. Sir Thomas's answer was as follows;—

"Southampton Buildings, December 31, 186—.

"SIR,—

"I can have nothing to do with Mr. O'Blather and the post-office at Percycross."

"I am,

"Your obedient servant,

"THOMAS UNDERWOOD.

"MR. PETER PIPER, Post-office, Percycross."

Christmas had passed,—and had passed uncomfortably enough at Popham Villa, in which retreat neither of the three young ladies was at present very happy,—when Sir Thomas was invited by Mr. Trigger to take further steps with reference to the petitions. It was thought necessary that there should be a meeting in the conservative interest, and it was suggested that this meeting should take place in Sir Thomas's chambers. Mr. Trigger in making the proposition seemed to imply that a great favour was thereby conferred on Sir Thomas,—as that country is supposed to be most honoured which is selected as the meeting-ground for plenipotentiaries when some important international point requires to be settled. Sir Thomas could not see the arrangement in that light, and would have shuffled out of the honour had it been possible. But it was not possible. At this period of the year Mr. Griffenbottom had no house in town, and Mr. Trigger explained that it was inexpedient that such meetings should take place at hotels. There was no place so fitting as a lawyer's chambers. Sir Thomas, who regarded as a desecration the entrance of one such man as Mr. Trigger into his private room, and who was particularly anxious not to fall into any intimacy with Mr. Griffenbottom, was driven to consent, and at one o'clock on the 29th, Stemm was forced to admit the deputation. The deputation from Percycross consisted of Mr. Trigger, Mr. Spicer, and Mr. Pile; but with them came also the senior sitting member. At first they were all very grave, and Sir Thomas asked them, indiscreetly, whether they would take a glass of sherry. Pile and Spicer immediately acceded to this proposition, and sherry was perhaps efficacious in bringing about speedy conversation.

"Well, Underyood," said Mr. Griffenbottom, "it seems that after all we are to have these d—— petitions." Sir Thomas lifted his left foot on his right knee, and nursed his leg,—but said nothing. On one point he was resolved;—nothing on earth should induce him to call his colleague Griffenbottom.

"No doubt about that, Mr. Griffenbottom," said Mr. Pile, "—that is, unless we can make Westmacott right. 'Tother chap wouldn't be of much account."

"Mr. Pile, you're going a little too fast," said Trigger.

"No, I ain't," said Mr. Pile. But for the moment he allowed himself to be silenced.

"We don't like the looks of it at Percyecross," said Mr. Spicer.

"And why don't we like the looks of it?" asked Sir Thomas.

"I don't know what your idea of pleasure is," said Mr. Griffenbottom, "but I don't take delight in spending money for nothing. I have spent enough, I can tell you, and I don't mean to spend much more. My seat was as safe as the Church."

"But they have petitioned against that as well as mine," said Sir Thomas.

"Yes;—they have. And now what's to be done?"

"I don't know whether Sir Thomas is willing to take the whole cost of the defence upon himself," said Mr. Trigger, pouring out for himself a second glass of sherry.

"No, I am not," said Sir Thomas. Whereupon there was a pause, during which Pile and Spieer also took second glasses of sherry.

"Why should I pay the cost of defending Mr. Griffenbottom's seat?"

"Why should I pay it?" said Griffenbottom. "My seat was safe enough. The fact is, if money was paid,—as to which I know nothing,—it was paid to get the second seat. Everybody knows that. Why should any one have paid money for me? I was safe. I never have any difficulty; everybody knows that. I could come in for Percyecross twenty times running, without buying a vote. Isn't that true, Trigger?"

"I believe you could, Mr. Griffenbottom."

"Of course I could. Look here, Underwood——"

"I beg your pardon for one moment, Mr. Griffenbottom," said Sir Thomas. "Will you tell me, Mr. Trigger, whether votes were bought on my behalf?" Mr. Trigger smiled, and put his head on one side, but made no answer. "I wish I might be allowed to hear the truth," continued Sir Thomas. Whereupon Spieer grinned, and Mr. Pile looked as though he were about to be sick. How was it that a set of gentlemen, who generally knew their business so well as did the political leaders at Percyecross, had got themselves into the same boat with a man silly enough to ask such a question as that?

"I shan't spend money," said Griffenbottom; "it's out of the question. They can't touch me. I've spent my money, and got my article. If others want the article, they must spend theirs."

Mr. Trigger thought it might be as well to change the subject for a moment, or, at any rate, to pass on to another clause of the same bill. "I was very sorry, Sir Thomas," said he, "that you wrote that letter to Mr. Givantake."

"I wrote no letter to Mr. Givantake. A man named Piper addressed me."

"Well, well, well; that's the same thing. It was Givantake, though of course he isn't going to sign his name to everything. If you could just have written a line to your friend the Postmaster-General, I really think we could have squared it all."

"I wouldn't have made a request so improper for all Percycross," said Sir Thomas.

"Patronage is open to everybody," suggested Mr. Griffenbottom.

"Those sort of favours are asked every day," said Trigger.

"We live in a free country," said Spicer.

"Givantake is a d—— scoundrel all the same," said Mr. Pile; "and as for his wife's Irish cousin, I should be very sorry to leave my letters in his hands."

"It wouldn't have come off, Mr. Pile," said Trigger, "but the request might have been made. If Sir Thomas will allow me to say as much, the request ought to have been made."

"I will allow nothing of the kind, Mr. Trigger," said Sir Thomas, with an assumption of personal dignity which caused every one in the room to alter his position in his chair. "I understand these things are given by merit." Mr. Trigger smiled, and Mr. Griffenbottom laughed outright. "At any rate, they ought to be, and in this office I believe they are." Mr. Griffenbottom, who had had the bestowal of some local patronage, laughed again.

"The thing is over now, at any rate," said Mr. Trigger.

"I saw Givantake yesterday," said Spicer. "He won't stir a finger now."

"He never would have stirred a finger," said Mr. Pile; "and if he'd stirred both his fistesses, he wouldn't have done a ha'porth of good. Givantake, indeed! He be blowed!" There was a species of honesty about Mr. Pile which almost endeared him to Sir Thomas.

"Something must be settled," said Trigger.

"I thought you'd got a proposition to make," said Spicer.

"Well, Sir Thomas," began Mr. Trigger, as it were girding his loins for the task before him, "we think that your seat wouldn't stand the brunt. We've been putting two and two together and that's what we think." A very black cloud came over the brow of Sir Thomas Underwood, but at the moment he said nothing. "Of course it can be defended. If you choose to fight the battle you can defend it. It will cost about £1,500,—or perhaps a little more. That is, the two sides, for both will have to be paid." Mr. Trigger paused again, but still Sir Thomas said not a word. "Mr. Griffenbottom thinks that he should not be asked to take any part of this cost."

"Not a shilling," said Mr. Griffenbottom.

"Well," continued Mr. Trigger, "that being the case, of course we have got to see what will be our best plan of action. I suppose, Sir Thomas, you are not altogether indifferent about the money."

"By no means," said Sir Thomas.

"I don't know who is. Money is money all the world over."

"You may say that," put in Mr. Spicer.

"Just let me go on for a moment, Mr. Spicer, till I make this thing clear to Sir Thomas. That's how we stand at present. It will cost us,—that is to say you,—about £1,500, and we should do no good. I really don't think we should do any good. Here are these judges, and you know that new brooms sweep clean. I suppose we may allow that there was a little money spent somewhere. They do say now that a glass of beer would lose a seat."

Sir Thomas could not but remember all that he had said to prevent there being even a glass of beer, and the way in which he had been treated by all the party in that matter, because he had so endeavoured. But it was useless to refer to all that at the present moment. "It seems to me," he said, "that if one seat be vacated, both must be vacated."

"It doesn't follow at all," said Mr. Griffenbottom.

"Allow me just for a moment longer," continued Trigger, who rose from his seat as he came to the real gist of his speech. "A proposition has been made to us, Sir Thomas, and I am able to say that it is one which may be trusted. Of course our chief anxiety is for the party. You feel that, Sir Thomas, of course." Sir Thomas would not condescend to make any reply to this. "Now the Liberals will be content with one seat. If we go on it will lead to disfranchising the borough, and we none of us want that. It would be no satisfaction to you, Sir Thomas, to be the means of robbing the borough of its privilege after all that the borough has done for you."

"Go on, Mr. Trigger," said Sir Thomas.

"The Liberals only want one seat. If you'll undertake to accept the Hundreds, the petition will be withdrawn, and Mr. Westmacott will come forward again. In that case we shouldn't oppose. Now, Sir Thomas, you know what the borough thinks will be the best course for all of us to pursue."

Sir Thomas did know. We may say that he had known for some minutes past. He had perceived what was coming, and various recollections had floated across his mind. He especially remembered that £50 for the poor old women which Mr. Trigger only a week since had recommended that he should give,—and he remembered also that he had given it. He recollects the sum which he had already paid for his election expenses, as to which Mr. Trigger had been very careful to get the money before this new proposition was made. He remembered Mr. Pabsby and his cheque for £20. He remembered his broken arm, and that fortnight of labour and infinite vexation in the borough. He remembered all his hopes, and his girls' triumph. But he remembered also that he had told himself a dozen times since his return that he wished that he might rid himself altogether of Percycross and the seat in Parliament. Now a proposition that would have this effect was made to him.

" Well, Sir Thomas, what do you think of it ? " asked Mr. Trigger.

Sir Thomas required the passing of a few moments that he might think of it, and yet there was a feeling strong at his heart telling him that it behoved him not even to seem to doubt. He was a man not deficient in spirit when roused as he now was roused. He knew that he was being ill used. From the first moment of his entering Percy-cross he had felt that the place was not fit for him, that it required a method of canvassing of which he was not only ignorant, but desirous to remain ignorant,—that at Percy-cross he would only be a catspaw in the hands of other men. He knew that he could not safely get into the same boat with Mr. Griffenbottom, or trust himself to the steering of such a coxswain as Mr. Trigger. He had found that there could be no sympathy between himself and any one of those who constituted his own party in the borough. And yet he had persevered. He had persevered because in such matters it is so difficult to choose the moment in which to recede. He had persevered,—and had attained a measure of success. As far as had been possible for him to do so, he had fought his battle with clean hands, and now he was member of Parliament for Percy-cross. Let what end there might come to this petition,—even though his seat should be taken from him,—he could be subjected to no personal disgrace. He could himself give evidence, the truth of which no judge in the land would doubt, as to the purity of his own intentions, and as to the struggle to be pure which he had made. And now they asked him to give way in order that Mr. Griffenbottom might keep his seat !

He felt that he and poor Moggs had been fools together. At this moment there came upon him a reflection that such men as he and Moggs were unable to open their mouths in such a borough as Percy-cross without having their teeth picked out of their jaws. He remembered well poor Moggs's legend, " Moggs, Purity, and the Rights of Labour ;" and he remembered thinking at the time that neither Moggs nor he should have come to Percy-cross. And now he was told of all that the borough had done for him, and was requested to show his gratitude by giving up his seat,—in order that Griffenbottom might still be a member of Parliament, and that Percy-cross might not be disfranchised ! Did he feel any gratitude to Percy-cross or any love to Mr. Griffenbottom ? In his heart he desired that Mr. Griffenbottom might be made to retire into private life, and he knew that it would be well that the borough should be disfranchised.

These horrid men that sat around him,—how he hated them ! He could get rid of them now, now and for ever, by acceding to the proposition made to him. And he thought that in doing so he could speak a few words which would be very agreeable to him in the speaking. And then all that Mr. Trigger had said about the £1,500 had been doubtless true. If he defended his seat money must be

spent, and he did not know how far he might be able to compel Mr. Griffenbottom to share the expense. He was not so rich but what he was bound to think of the money, for his children's sake. And he did believe Mr. Trigger, when Mr. Trigger told him that the seat could not be saved.

Yet he could not bring himself to let these men have their way with him. To have to confess that he had been their tool went so much against the grain with him that anything seemed to him to be preferable to that. The passage across his brain of all these thoughts had not required many seconds, and his guests seemed to acknowledge by their silence that some little space of time should be allowed to him. Mr. Pile was leaning forward on his stick with his eyes fixed upon Sir Thomas's face. Mr. Spicer was amusing himself with a third glass of sherry. Mr. Griffenbottom had assumed a look of absolute indifference, and was sitting with his eyes fixed upon the ceiling. Mr. Trigger, with a pleasant smile on his face, was leaning back in his chair with his hands in his trousers pockets. He had done his disagreeable job of work, and upon the whole he thought that he had done it well.

"I shall do nothing of the kind," said Sir Thomas at last.

"You'll be wrong, Sir Thomas," said Mr. Trigger.

"You'll disfranchise the borough," said Mr. Spicer.

"You'll not be able to keep your seat," said Mr. Trigger.

"And there'll be all the money to pay," said Mr. Spicer.

"Sir Thomas don't mind that," said Mr. Griffenbottom.

"As for paying the money, I do mind it very much," said Sir Thomas. "As for disfranchising the borough, I cannot say that I regard it in the least. As to your seat, Mr. Griffenbottom——"

"My seat is quite safe," said the senior member.

"As to your seat, which I am well aware must be jeopardised if mine be in jeopardy, it would have been matter of more regret to me, had I experienced from you any similar sympathy for myself. As it is, it seems that each of us is to do the best he can for himself, and I shall do the best I can for myself. Good morning."

"What then do you mean to do?" said Mr. Trigger.

"On that matter I shall prefer to converse with my friends."

"You mean," said Mr. Trigger, "that you will put it into other hands."

"You have made a proposition to me, Mr. Trigger, and I have given you my answer. I have nothing else to say. What steps I may take I do not even know at present."

"You will let us hear from you," said Mr. Trigger.

"I cannot say that I will."

"This comes of bringing a gentleman learned in the law down into the borough," said Mr. Griffenbottom.

"Gentlemen, I must ask you to leave me," said Sir Thomas, rising from his chair and ringing the bell.

"Look here, Sir Thomas Underwood," said Mr. Griffenbottom. "This to me is a very important matter."

"And to me also," said Sir Thomas.

"I do not know anything about that. Like a good many others, you may like to have a seat in Parliament, and may like to get it without any trouble and without any money. I have sat for Percy-cross for many years, and have spent a treasure, and have worked myself off my legs. I don't know that I care much for anything except for keeping my place in the House. The House is everything to me,—meat and drink; employment and recreation; and I can tell you I'm not going to lose my seat if I can help it. You came in for the second chance, Sir Thomas; and a very good second chance it was if you'd just have allowed others who knew what they were about to manage matters for you. That chance is over now, and according to all rules that ever I heard of in such matters, you ought to surrender. Isn't that so, Mr. Trigger?"

"Certainly, Mr. Griffenbottom, according to my ideas," said Mr. Trigger.

"That's about it," said Mr. Spicer.

Sir Thomas was still standing. Indeed they were all standing now. "Mr. Griffenbottom," he said, "I have nothing further that I can say at the present moment. To the offer made to me by Mr. Trigger I at present positively decline to accede. I look upon that offer as unfriendly, and can therefore only wish you a good morning."

"Unfriendly," said Mr. Griffenbottom with a sneer.

"Good-bye, Sir Thomas," said Mr. Pile, putting out his hand. Sir Thomas shook hands with Mr. Pile cordially. "It's my opinion that he's right," said Mr. Pile. "I don't like his notions, but I do like his pluck. Good-bye, Sir Thomas." Then Mr. Pile led the way out of the room, and the others followed him.

"Oh!" said Stemm, as soon as he had shut the door behind their backs. "That's a deputation from Percy-cross, is it, Sir Thomas? You were saying as how you didn't quite approve of the Percy-crossians." To this, however, Sir Thomas vouchsafed no reply.

CHAPTER XL.

WHAT SIR THOMAS THOUGHT ABOUT IT.

SI R THOMAS UNDERWOOD had been engaged upon a very great piece of work ever since he had been called to the Bar in the twenty-fifth year of his life. He had then devoted himself to the

writing of a life of Lord Verulam, and had been at it ever since. But as yet he had not written a word. In early life, that is, up to his fortieth year, he had talked freely enough about his opus magnum to those of his compeers with whom he had been intimate ; but of late Bacon's name had never been on his lips. Patience, at home, was aware of the name and nature of her father's occupation, but Clarissa had not yet learned to know that he who had been the great philosopher and little Lord Chancellor was not to be lightly mentioned. To Stemm the matter had become so serious, that in speaking of books, papers, and documents he would have recourse to any periphrasis rather than mention in his master's hearing the name of the fallen angel. And yet Sir Thomas was always talking to himself about Sir Francis Bacon, and was always writing his life.

There are men who never dream of great work, who never realise to themselves the need of work so great as to demand a lifetime, but who themselves never fail in accomplishing those second-class tasks with which they satisfy their own energies. Men these are who to the world are very useful. Some few there are, who seeing the beauty of a great work and believing in its accomplishment within the years allotted to man, are contented to struggle for success, and struggling, fail. Here and there comes one who struggles and succeeds. But the men are many who see the beauty, who adopt the task, who promise themselves the triumph, and then never struggle at all. The task is never abandoned ; but days go by and weeks ; and then months and years,—and nothing is done. The dream of youth becomes the doubt of middle life, and then the despair of age. In building a summer-house it is so easy to plant the first stick, but one does not know where to touch the sod when one begins to erect a castle. So it had been with Sir Thomas Underwood and his life of Bacon. It would not suffice to him to scrape together a few facts, to indulge in some fiction, to tell a few anecdotes, and then to call his book a biography. Here was a man who had risen higher and was reported to have fallen lower,—perhaps than any other son of Adam. With the finest intellect ever given to a man, with the purest philanthropy and the most enduring energy, he had become a by-word for greed and injustice. Sir Thomas had resolved that he would tell the tale as it had never yet been told, that he would unravel facts that had never seen the light, that he would let the world know of what nature really had been this man,—and that he would write a book that should live. He had never abandoned his purpose ; and now at sixty years of age, his purpose remained with him, but not one line of his book was written.

And yet the task had divorced him in a measure from the world. He had not been an unsuccessful man in life. He had made money, and had risen nearly to the top of his profession. He had been in

Parliament, and was even now a member. But yet he had been divorced from the world, and Bacon had done it. By Bacon he had justified to himself,—or rather had failed to justify to himself,—a seclusion from his family and from the world which had been intended for strenuous work, but had been devoted to dilettante idleness. And he had fallen into those mistakes which such habits and such pursuits are sure to engender. He thought much, but he thought nothing out, and was consequently at sixty still in doubt about almost everything. Whether Christ did or did not die to save sinners was a question with him so painfully obscure that he had been driven to obtain what comfort he might from not thinking of it. The assurance of belief certainly was not his to enjoy ;—nor yet that absence from fear which may come from assured unbelief. And yet none who knew him could say that he was a bad man. He robbed no one. He never lied. He was not self-indulgent. He was affectionate. But he had spent his life in an intention to write the life of Lord Verulam, and not having done it, had missed the comfort of self-respect. He had intended to settle for himself a belief on subjects which are, of all, to all men the most important ; and, having still postponed the work of inquiry, had never attained the security of a faith. He was for ever doubting, for ever intending, and for ever despising himself for his doubts and unaccomplished intentions. Now, at the age of sixty, he had thought to lessen these inward disturbances by returning to public life, and his most unsatisfactory alliance with Mr. Griffenbottom had been the result.

They who know the agonies of an ambitious, indolent, doubting, self-accusing man,—of a man who has a skeleton in his cupboard as to which he can ask for sympathy from no one,—will understand what feelings were at work within the bosom of Sir Thomas when his Pereycross friends left him alone in his chamber. The moment that he knew that he was alone he turned the lock of the door, and took from out a standing desk a whole heap of loose papers. These were the latest of his notes on the great Bacon subject. For though no line of the book had ever been written,—nor had his work even yet taken such form as to enable him to write a line,—nevertheless, he always had by him a large assemblage of documents, notes, queries, extracts innumerable, and references which in the course of years had become almost unintelligible to himself, upon which from time to time he would set himself to work. Whenever he was most wretched he would fly at his papers. When the qualms of his conscience became very severe, he would copy some passage from a dusty book, hardly in the belief that it might prove to be useful, but with half a hope that he might cheat himself into so believing. Now, in his misery, he declared that he would bind himself to his work and never leave it. There, if anywhere, might consolation be found.

With rapid hands he moved about the papers, and tried to fix his eyes upon the words. But how was he to fix his thoughts? He could not even begin not to think of those scoundrels who had so misused him. It was not a week since they had taken £50 from him for the poor of Pereyross, and now they came to him with a simple statement that he was absolutely to be thrown over! He had already paid £900 for his election, and was well aware that the account was not closed. And he was a man who could not bear to speak about money, or to make any complaint as to money. Even though he was being so abominably misused, still he must pay any further claim that might be made on him in respect of the election that was past. Yes;—he must pay for those very purchased votes, for that bribery, as to which he had so loudly expressed his abhorrence, and by reason of which he was now to lose his seat with ignominy.

But the money was not the worst of it. There was a heavier sorrow than that arising from the loss of his money. He alone had been just throughout the contest at Pereyross; he alone had been truthful, and he alone straightforward! And yet he alone must suffer! He began to believe that Griffenbottom would keep his seat. That he would certainly lose his own, he was quite convinced. He might lose it by undergoing an adverse petition, and paying ever so much more money,—or he might lose it in the manner that Mr. Trigger had so kindly suggested. In either way there would be disgrace, and contumely, and hours of the agony of self-reproach in store for him!

What excuse had he for placing himself in contact with such filth? Of what childishness had he not been the victim when he allowed himself to dream that he, a pure and scrupulous man, could go among such impurity as he had found at Pereyross, and come out, still clean and yet triumphant? Then he thought of Griffenbottom as a member of Parliament, and of that Legislation and that Constitution to which Griffenbottoms were thought to be essentially necessary. That there are always many such men in the House he had always known. He had sat there and had seen them. He had stood shoulder to shoulder with them through many a division, and had thought about them,—acknowledging their use. But now that he was brought into personal contact with such an one, his very soul was aghast. The Griffenbottoms never do anything in polities. They are men of whom in the lump it may be surmised that they take up this or that side in polities, not from any instructed conviction, not from faith in measures or even in men, nor from adherence either through reason or prejudice to this or that set of political theories,—but simply because on this side or on that there is an opening. That gradually they do grow into some shape of conviction from the moulds in which they are made to live, must be believed of them;

but these convictions are convictions as to divisions, convictions as to patronage, convictions as to success, convictions as to Parliamentary management; but not convictions as to the political needs of the people. So said Sir Thomas to himself as he sat thinking of the Griffenbottoms. In former days he had told himself that a pudding cannot be made without suet or dough, and that Griffenbottoms were necessary if only for the due adherence of the plums. Whatever most health-bestowing drug the patient may take would bestow anything but health were it taken undiluted. It was thus in former days Sir Thomas had apologised to himself for the Griffenbottoms in the House;—but no such apology satisfied him now. This log of a man, this lump of suet, this diluting quantity of most impure water,—'twas thus that Mr. Griffenbottom was spoken of by Sir Thomas to himself as he sat there with all the Bacon documents before him,—this politician, whose only real political feeling consisted in a positive love of corruption for itself, had not only absolutely got the better of him, who regarded himself at any rate as a man of mind and thought, but had used him as a puppet, and had compelled him to do dirty work. Oh,—that he should have been so lost to his own self-respect as to have allowed himself to be dragged through the dirt of Percy-cross!

But he must do something;—he must take some step. Mr. Griffenbottom had declared that he would put himself to no expense in defending the seat. Of course he, Sir Thomas, could do the same. He believed that it might be practicable for him to acknowledge the justice of the petition, to declare his belief that his own agents had betrayed him, and to acknowledge that his seat was indefensible. But, as he thought of it, he found that he was actually ignorant of the law in the matter. That he would make no such bargain as that suggested to him by Mr. Trigger,—of so much he thought that he was sure. At any rate he would do nothing that he himself knew to be dishonourable. He must consult his own attorney. That was the end of his self-deliberation,—that, and a conviction that under no circumstances could he retain his seat.

Then he struggled hard for an hour to keep his mind fixed on the subject of his great work. He had found an unknown memoir respecting Bacon, written by a German pen in the Latin language, published at Leipzig shortly after the date of Bacon's fall. He could translate that. It is always easiest for the mind to work in such emergencies, on some matter as to which no creative struggles are demanded from it.

CHAPTER XLI.

A BROKEN HEART.

IT was very bad with Clarissa when Ralph Newton was closeted with Mary at Popham Villa. She had suspected what was about to take place, when Sir Thomas and Ralph went together into the room; but at that moment she said nothing. She endeavoured to seem to be cheerful, and attempted to joke with Mary. The three girls were sitting at the table on which lunch was spread,—a meal which no one was destined to eat at Popham Villa on that day,—and thus they remained till Sir Thomas joined them. "Mary," he had said, "Ralph Newton wishes to speak to you. You had better go to him."

"To me, uncle?"

"Yes, to you. You had better go to him."

"But I had rather not."

"Of course you must do as you please, but I would advise you to go to him." Then she had risen very slowly and had gone.

All of them had understood what it meant. To Clarissa the thing was as certain as though she already heard the words spoken. With Patience even there was no doubt. Sir Thomas, though he had told nothing, did not pretend that the truth was to be hidden. He looked at his younger daughter sorrowfully, and laid his hand upon her head caressingly. With her there was no longer the possibility of retaining any secret, hardly the remembrance that there was a secret to retain. "Oh, papa," she said;—"oh, papa!" and burst into tears.

"My dear," he said, "believe me that it is best that it should be so. He is unworthy." Patience said not a word, but was now holding Clarissa close to her bosom. "Tell Mary," continued Sir Thomas, "that I will see her when she is at liberty. Patience, you can ask Ralph whether it will suit him to stay for dinner. I am tired and will go up-stairs myself." And so the two girls were left together.

"Patty, take me away," said Clarissa. "I must never see him again,—never!—nor her."

"She will not accept him, Clary."

"Yes, she will. I know she will. She is a sly, artful creature. And I have been so good to her."

"No, Clary;—I think not;—but what does it matter? He is unworthy. He can be nothing to you now. Papa was right. He is unworthy."

"I care nothing for that. I only care for him. Oh, Patty, take me away. I could not bear to see them when they come out."

Then Patience took her sister up to their joint room, and laid the poor sufferer on the bed, and throwing herself on her knees beside the bed, wept over her sister and caressed her. That argument of Ralph's unworthiness was nothing to Clarissa. She did not consider herself to be so worthy but what she might forgive any sin, if only the chance of forgiving such sin were given to her. At this moment in her heart of hearts her anger was more against her rival than against the man. She had not yet taught herself to think of all his baseness to her,—had only as yet had time to think that that evil had come upon her which she had feared from the first moment of her cousin's arrival.

Presently Patience heard the door opened of the room down-stairs and heard Mary's slow step as she crossed the hall. She understood well that some one should be below, and with another single word of affection to her sister, she went down-stairs. "Well, Mary," she said, looking into her cousin's face.

"There is nothing particular to tell," said Mary, with a gentle smile.

"Of course we all knew what he wanted."

"Then of course you all knew what I should say to him."

"I knew," said Patience.

"I am sure that Clary knew," said Mary. "But he is all alone there, and will not know what to do with himself. Won't you go to him?"

"You will go up to Clary?" Mary nodded her head, and then Patience crossed the hall to liberate the rejected suitor. Mary stood for awhile thinking. She already knew from what Patience had said, that Clarissa had suspected her, and she felt that there should have been no such suspicion. Clarissa had not understood, but ought to have understood. For a moment she was angry, and was disposed to go to her own room. Then she remembered all her cousin's misery, and crept up-stairs to the door. She had come so softly, that though the door was hardly closed, nothing had been heard of her approach. "May I come in, dear?" she said very gently.

"Well, Mary; tell me all," said Clarissa.

"There is nothing to tell, Clary;—only this, that I fear Mr. Newton is not worthy of your love."

"He asked you to take him?"

"Never mind, dearest. We will not talk of that. Dear, dearest Clary, if I only could make you happy."

"But you have refused him?"

"Don't you know me better than to ask me? Don't you know where my heart is? We will carry our burdens together, dearest, and then they will be lighter."

"But he will come to you again;—that other one."

"Clary, dear ; we will not think about it. There are things which should not be thought of. We will not talk of it, but we will love each other so dearly." Clarissa, now that she was assured that her evil fortune was not to be aggravated by any injury done to her by her cousin, allowed herself to be tranquillised if not comforted. There was indeed something in her position that did not admit of comfort. All the family knew the story of her unrequited love, and treated her with a compassion which, while its tenderness was pleasant to her, was still in itself an injury. A vain attachment in a woman's heart must ever be a weary load, because she can take no step of her own towards that consummation by which the burden may be converted into a joy. A man may be active, may press his suit even a tenth time, may do something towards achieving success. A woman can only be still and endure. But Clarissa had so managed her affairs that even that privilege of being still was hardly left to her. Her trouble was known to them all. She doubted whether even the servants in the house did not know the cause of her woe. How all this had come to pass she could not now remember. She had told Patience,—as though in compliance with some compact that each should ever tell the other all things. And then circumstances had arisen which made it so natural that she should be open and candid with Mary. The two Ralphs were to be their two lovers. That to her had been a delightful dream during the last few months. He, whose inheritance at that moment was supposed to have been gone, had, as Clarissa thought, in plainest language told his love to her. "Dear, dear Clary, you know I love you." The words to her sense had been so all-important, had meant so much, had seemed to be so final, that they hardly wanted further corroboration. Then, indeed, had come the great fault,—the fault which she had doubted whether she could ever pardon ; and she, because of the heinousness of that offence, had been unable to answer the question that had been asked. But the offence, such as it was, had not lightened the solemnity of her assurance, as far as love went, that Ralph ought to be her own after the speaking of such words as he had spoken. There were those troubles about money, but yet she was entitled to regard him as her own. Then had come the written offer from the other Ralph to Mary,—the offer written in the moment of his believed prosperity ; and it had been so natural that Clarissa should tell her cousin that as regarded the splendour of position there should be no jealousy between them. Clarissa did not herself think much of a lover who wrote letters instead of coming and speaking,—had perhaps an idea that open speech, even though offence might follow, was better than formal letters ; but all that was Mary's affair. This very respectful Ralph was Mary's lover, and if Mary were satisfied, she would not quarrel with the well-behaved young man. She

would not even quarrel with him because he was taking from her own Ralph the inheritance which for so many years had been believed to be his own. Thus in the plenitude of her affection and in the serenity of her heart she had told everything to her cousin. And now also her father knew it all. How this had come to pass she did not think to inquire. She suspected no harm from Patience. The thing had been so clear, that all the world might see it. Ralph, that false one, knew it also. Who could know it so well as he did? Had not those very words been spoken by him,—been repeated by him? Now she was as one stricken, where wounds could not be hidden.

On that day Ralph was driven back to town in his cab, in a rather disheartened condition, and no more was seen or heard of him for the present at Popham Villa. His late guardian had behaved very ill to him in telling Mary Bonner the story of Polly Neefit. That was his impression,—feeling sure that Mary had alluded to the unfortunate affair with the breeches-maker's daughter, of which she could have heard tidings only from Sir Thomas. As to Clarissa, he had not exactly forgotten the little affair on the lawn; but to his eyes that affair had been so small as to be almost overlooked amidst larger matters. Mary, he thought, had never looked so beautiful as she had done while refusing him. He did not mean to give her up. Her heart, she had told him, was not her own. He thought he had read of young ladies in similar conditions, of young ladies who had bestowed their hearts and had afterwards got them back again for the sake of making second bestowals. He was not sure but that such an object would lend a zest to life. There was his brother Gregory in love with Clarissa, and still true to her. He would be true to Mary, and would see whether, in spite of that far-away lover, he might not be more successful than his brother. At any rate he would not give her up,—and before he had gone to bed that night he had already concocted a letter to her in his brain, explaining the whole of that Neefit affair, and asking her whether a man should be condemned to misery for life because he had been led by misfortune into such a mistake as that. He dined very well at his club, and on the following morning went down to the Moonbeam by an early train, for that day's hunting. Thence he returned to Newton Priory in time for Christmas, and as he was driven up to his own house, through his own park, meeting one or two of his own tenants, and encountering now and then his own obsequious labourers, he was not an unhappy man in spite of Mary Bonner's cruel answer. It may be doubted whether his greatest trouble at this moment did not arise from his dread of Neefit. He had managed to stay long enough in London to give orders that Neefit's money should be immediately paid. He knew that Neefit could not harm him at law; but it would not be

agreeable if the old man were to go about the country telling everyone that he, Ralph Newton of Newton, had twice offered to marry Polly. For the present we will leave him, although he is our hero, and will return to the girls at Popham Villa.

"It is all very well talking, Patience, but I don't mean to try to change," Clarissa said. This was after that visit of the Percycross deputation to Sir Thomas, and after Christmas. More than a week had now passed by since Ralph had rushed down to Fulham with his offer, and the new year had commenced. Sir Thomas had been at home for Christmas,—for the one day,—and had then returned to London. He had seen his attorney respecting the petition, who was again to see Mr. Griffenbottom's London attorney and Mr. Trigger. In the meantime Sir Thomas was to remain quiet for a few days. The petition was not to be tried till the end of February, and there was still time for deliberation. Sir Thomas just now very often took out that great heap of Baconian papers, but still not a word of the biography was written. He was, alas! still very far from writing the first word. "It is all very well, Patience, but I do not mean to try to change," said Clarissa.

Poor Patience could make no answer, dreadful as was to her such an assertion from a young woman. "There is a man who clearly does not want to marry you, who has declared in the plainest way that he does want to marry some one else, who has grossly deceived you, and who never means to think of you again; and yet you say that you will wilfully adhere to your regard for him!" Such would have been the speech which Patience would have made, had she openly expressed her thoughts. But Clarissa was ill, and weak, and wretched; and Patience could not bring herself to say a word that should distress her sister.

"If he came to me to-morrow, of course I should forgive him," Clarissa said again. These conversations were never commenced by Patience, who would rather have omitted any mention of that base young man. "Of course I should. Men do do those things. Men are not like women. They do all manner of things and everybody forgives them. I don't say anything about hoping. I don't hope for anything. I am not happy enough to hope. I shouldn't care if I knew I were going to die to-morrow. But there can be no change. If you want me to be a hypocrite, Patience, I will; but what will be the use? The truth will be the same."

The two girls let her have her way, never contradicted her, coaxed her, and tried to comfort her;—but it was in vain. At first she would not go out of the house, not even to church, and then she took to lying in bed. This lasted into the middle of January, and still Sir Thomas did not come home. He wrote frequently, short notes to Patience, sending money, making excuses, making promises,

always expressing some word of hatred or disgust as to Percyecross ; but still he did not come. At last, when Clarissa declared that she preferred lying in bed to getting up, Patience went up to London and fetched her father home. It had gone so far with Sir Thomas now that he was unable even to attempt to defend himself. He humbly said that he was sorry that he had been away so long, and returned with Patience to the villa.

"My dear," said Sir Thomas, seating himself by Clarissa's bedside, "this is very bad."

"If I had known you were coming, papa, I would have got up."

"If you are not well, perhaps you are better here, dear."

"I don't think I am quite well, papa."

"What is it, my love?" Clarissa looked at him out of her large tear-laden eyes, but said nothing. "Patience says that you are not happy."

"I don't know that anybody is happy, papa."

"I wish that you were with all my heart, my child. Can your father do anything that will make you happy?"

"No, papa."

"Tell me, Clary. You do not mind my asking you questions?"

"No, papa."

"Patience tells me that you are still thinking of Ralph Newton."

"Of course I think of him."

"I think of him too;—but there are different ways of thinking. We have known him, all of us, a long time."

"Yes, papa."

"I wish with all my heart that we had never seen him. He is not worthy of our solicitude."

"You always liked him. I have heard you say you loved him dearly."

"I have said so, and I did love him. In a certain way I love him still."

"So do I, papa."

"But I know him to be unworthy. Even if he had come here to offer you his hand I doubt whether I could have permitted an engagement. Do you know that within the last two months he has twice offered to marry another young woman, and I doubt whether he is not at this moment engaged to her?"

"Another?" said poor Clarissa.

"Yes, and that without a pretence of affection on his part, simply because he wanted to get money from her father."

"Are you sure, papa?" asked Clarissa, who was not prepared to believe, and did not believe this enormity on the part of the man she loved.

"I am quite sure. The father came to me to complain of him,

and I had the confession from Ralph's own lips, the very day that he came here with his insulting offer to Mary Bonner."

"Did you tell Mary?"

"No. I knew that it was unnecessary. There was no danger as to Mary. And who do you think this girl was? The daughter of a tailor, who had made some money. It was not that he cared for her, Clary;—no more than I do! Whether he meant to marry her or not I do not know."

"I'm sure he didn't, papa," said Clarissa, getting up in bed.

"And will that make it better? All that he wanted was the tradesman's money, and to get that he was willing either to deceive the girl, or to sell himself to her. I don't know which would have been the baser mode of traffic. Is that the conduct of a gentleman, Clary?"

Poor Clarissa was in terrible trouble. She hardly believed the story, which seemed to tell her of a degree of villainy greater than ever her imagination had depicted to her;—and yet, if it were true, she would be driven to look for means of excusing it. The story as told was indeed hardly just to Ralph, who in the course of his transactions with Mr. Neefit had almost taught himself to believe that he could love Polly very well; but it was not in this direction that Clarissa looked for an apology for such conduct. "They say that men do all manner of things," she said, at last.

"I can only tell you this," said Sir Thomas very gravely, "what men may do I will not say, but no gentleman can ever have acted after this fashion. He has shown himself to be a scoundrel."

"Papa, papa; don't say that!" screamed Clarissa.

"My child, I can only tell you the truth. I know it is hard to bear. I would save you if I could; but it is better that you should know."

"Will he always be bad, papa?"

"Who can say, my dear? God forbid that I should be too severe upon him. But he has been so bad now that I am bound to tell you that you should drive him from your thoughts. When he told me, all smiling, that he had come down here to ask your cousin Mary to be his wife, I was almost minded to spurn him from the door. He can have no feeling himself of true attachment, and cannot know what it means in others! He is heartless,—and unprincipled."

"Oh, papa, spare him. It is done now."

"And you will forget him, dearest?"

"I will try, papa. But I think that I shall die. I would rather die. What is the good of living when nobody is to care for anybody, and people are so bad as that?"

"My Clarissa must not say that nobody cares for her. Has any person ever been false to you but he? Is not your sister true to you?"

"Yes, papa."

"And Mary?"

"Yes, papa." He was afraid to ask her whether he also had not been true to her? Even in that moment there arose in his mind a doubt, whether all this evil might not have been avoided, had he contented himself to live beneath the same roof with his children. He said nothing of himself, but she supplied the want. "I know you love me, papa, and have always been good to me. I did not mean that. But I never cared for any one but him,—in that way."

Sir Thomas, in dealing with the character of his late ward, had been somewhat too severe. It is difficult, perhaps, to say what amount of misconduct does constitute a scoundrel, or justifies the critic in saying that this or that man is not a gentleman. There be those who affirm that he who owes a debt for goods which he cannot pay is no gentleman, and tradesmen when they cannot get their money are no doubt sometimes inclined to hold that opinion. But the opinion is changed when the money comes at last,—especially if it comes with interest. Ralph had never owed a shilling which he did not intend to pay, and had not property to cover. That borrowing of money from Mr. Neefit was doubtless bad. No one would like to know that his son had borrowed money from his tailor. But it is the borrowing of the money that is bad, rather than the special dealing with the tradesman. And as to that affair with Polly, some excuse may be made. He had meant to be honest to Neefit, and he had meant to be true to Neefit's daughter. Even Sir Thomas, high-minded as he was, would hardly have passed so severe a sentence, had not the great sufferer in the matter been his own daughter.

But the words that he spoke were doubtless salutary to poor Clarissa. She never again said to Patience that she would not try to make a change, nor did she ever again declare that if Ralph came back again she would forgive him. On the day after the scene with her father she was up again, and she made an effort to employ herself about the house. On the next Sunday she went to church, and then they all knew that she was making the necessary struggle. Ralph's name was never mentioned, nor for a time was any allusion made to the family of the Newtons. "The worst of it, I think, is over," said Patience one day to Mary.

"The worst of it is over," said Mary; "but it is not all over. It is hard to forget when one has loved."

CHAPTER XLII.

NOT BROKEN-HEARTED.

CHRISTMAS had come and gone at Newton Priory, and the late Squire's son had left the place,—protesting as he did so that he left it for ever. To him also life in that particular spot of earth was impossible, unless he could live there as the lord and master of all. Everybody throughout that and neighbouring parishes treated him not only with kindness, but with the warmest affection. The gentry, the farmers, and the labourers, all men who had known him in the hunting-field, in markets, on the bench, or at church, men, women and children, joined together in forming plans by means of which he could remain at Newton. The young Squire asked him to make the house his home, at any rate for the hunting season. The parson offered half the parsonage. His friend Morris, who was a bachelor, suggested a joint home and joint stables between them. But it was all of no avail. Had it not been for the success which had so nearly crowned the late Squire's efforts during the last six months, it might have been that his friends would have prevailed with him. But he had been too near being the master to be able to live at Newton in any other capacity. The tenants had been told that they were to be his tenants. The servants had been told that they were to be his servants. During a few short weeks, he had almost been master, so absolute had been the determination of the old Squire to show to all around him that his son, in spite of the blot upon the young man's birth, was now the heir in all things, and possessed of every privilege which would attach itself to an elder son. He himself while his father lived had taken these things calmly, had shown no elation, had even striven to moderate the vehemence of his father's efforts on his behalf;—but not the less had he been conscious of the value of what was being done for him. To be the promised future owner of the acres on which he had lived, of the coverts through which he had ridden, of every tree and bank which he had known from his boyhood, had been to him a source of gratified pride not the less strong because he had concealed it. The disappointment did hit him sorely. His dreams had been of parliament, of power in the county, of pride of place, and popularity. He now found that they were to be no more than dreams;—but with this additional sorrow, that all around him knew that they had been dreamed. No;—he could not stay at Newton even for the sake of living with friends who loved him so dearly. He said little or nothing of this to any one. Not even to Gregory Newton or to his friend Morris did he tell much of

his feeling. He was not proud of his dreamings, and it seemed to himself that his punishment was just. Nor could he speak to either of them or to any man of his past ambition, or of what hopes might remain to him in reference to Mary Bonner. The young Squire had gone forth with the express purpose of wooing her, had declared his purpose of doing so, and had returned to Newton at any rate without any ready tale of triumph on his tongue. What had been his fortune the rival would not ask; and while the two remained together at the priory no further word was spoken of Mary Bonner. He, Ralph the dispossessed one, while he believed himself to be the heir, had intended to bring her home as a fitting queen to share his throne. It might be that she would consent to be his without a throne to share; but in thinking of her he could not but remember what his ambition had been, and he could hardly bring himself now to offer to her that which was comparatively so little worth the having. To suppose that she should already "be fond of him," should already long for him as he longed for her, was contrary to his nature. Hitherto when he had been in her presence, he had stood there as a man whose position in life was almost contemptible; and though it would be unjust to him to say that he had hoped to win her by his acres, still he had felt that his father's success on his behalf might justify him in that which would otherwise be unjustifiable. For the present, however, he could take no steps in that direction. He could only suggest to himself what had already been her answer, or what at some future time might be the answer she would make to his rival. He had lost a father between whom and himself there had existed ties, not only of tender love, but of perfect friendship, and for awhile he must bewail his loss. That he could not bewail his lost father without thinking of his lost property, and of the bride that had never been won, was an agony to his soul.

He had found a farm down in Norfolk, near to Swaffham, which he could take for twelve months, with the option of purchase at the expiration of that time, and thither he betook himself. There were about four hundred acres, and the place was within his means. He did not think it likely that Mary Bonner would choose to come and live upon a Norfolk farm; and yet what other work in life was there for which he was fit? Early in January he went down to Beamingham Hall, as the place was called, and there we will leave him for the present, consoling himself with oil-cake, and endeavouring to take a pride in a long row of stall-fed cattle.

At this time the two brothers were living at Newton Priory. Ralph the heir had bought some of his uncle's horses, and had commenced hunting with the hounds around him; though he had not as yet withdrawn his stud from the Moonbeam. He was not altogether at his ease, as he had before the end of February received three or four

letters from Neefit, all of them dictated by Waddle, in which his conduct was painted not in the most flattering colours. Neefit's money had been repaid, but Neefit would not understand that the young heir's obligations to him had by any means been acquitted by that very ordinary process. He had risked his money when payment was very doubtful, and now he intended to have something beyond cash in return for all that he had done. "There are debts of honour which a real gentleman feels himself more bound to pay than any bills," Waddle had written. And to such dogmatic teachings as these Neefit would always add something out of his own head. "There ain't nobody who shan't know all about it, unless you're on the square again." Ralph had written one reply since he had been at Newton, in which he explained at some length that it was impossible that he should renew his addresses to a young lady who had twice rejected them, and who had assured him that she did not love him. He professed the greatest respect for Miss Neefit, a respect which had, if possible, been heightened by her behaviour in this matter,—but it must now be understood that the whole affair was at an end. Neefit would not understand this, but Neefit's further letters, which had not been unfrequent, were left unanswered. Ralph had now told the whole story to his brother, and had written his one reply from Newton in conformity with his brother's advice. After that they both thought that no further rejoinder could be of any service.

The parsonage was for the time deserted, Gregory having for the present consented to share his brother's house. In spite of that little thorn in the flesh which Neefit was, Ralph was able to enjoy his life very thoroughly. He went on with all the improvements about the place which the Squire had commenced, and was active in making acquaintance with every one who lived upon his land. He was not without good instincts, and understood thoroughly that respectability had many more attractions than a character for evil living. He was, too, easily amenable to influence from those around him; and under Gregory's auspices, was constant at his parish church. He told himself at once that he had many duties to perform, and he attempted to perform them. He did not ask Lieutenant Cox or Captain Fooks to the Priory, and quite prepared himself for the character of Henry V. in miniature, as he walked about his park, and rode about his farms, and talked with the wealthier farmers on hunting mornings. He had a full conception of his own dignity, and some not altogether inaccurate idea of the manner in which it would become him to sustain it. He was, perhaps, a little too self-conscious, and over-inclined to suppose that people were regarding his conduct because he was Newton of Newton;—Newton of Newton with no blot on his shield, by right of his birth, and subject to no man's reproach.

He had failed grievously in one matter on which he had set his heart; but as to that he was, as the reader knows, resolved to try again. He had declared his passion to the other Ralph, but his rival had not made the confidence mutual. But hitherto he had said nothing on the subject to his brother. He had put it by, as it were, out of his mind for awhile, resolving that it should not trouble him immediately, in the middle of his new joys. It was a thing that would keep,—a thing, at any rate, that need not overshadow him night and morning. When Neefit continued to disturb him with threats of publicity in regard to Polly's wrongs, he did tell himself that in no way could he so effectually quiet Mr. Neefit as by marrying somebody else, and that he would, at some very early date, have recourse to this measure; but, in the meantime, he would enjoy himself without letting his unrequited passion lie too heavily as a burden on his heart. So he eat and drank, and rode and prayed, and sat with his brother magistrates on the bench, and never ceased to think of his good fortune, in that he had escaped from the troubles of his youth, unscathed and undegraded.

Then there came a further letter from Mr. Neefit, from which there arose some increase of confidence among the brothers. There was nothing special in this letter. These letters, indeed, were very like to each other, and, as had now come to be observed, were always received on a Tuesday morning. It was manifest to them that Neefit spent the leisure hours of his Sundays in meditating upon the hardness of his position; and that, as every Monday morning came, he caused a new letter to be written. On this particular Tuesday, Ralph had left home before the post had come, and did not get the breeches-maker's epistle till his return from hunting. He chuck'd it across the table to Gregory when he came down to dinner, and the parson read it. There was no new attack in it; and as the servant was in the room, nothing was then said about it. But after dinner the subject was discussed.

"I wish I knew how to stop the fellow's mouth," said the elder brother.

"I think I should get Carey to see him," suggested Gregory. "He would understand a lawyer when he was told that nothing could come of it but trouble to himself and his daughter."

"She has no hand in it, you know."

"But it must injure her."

"One would think so. But she is a girl whom nothing can injure. You can't imagine how good and how great she is;—great in her way, that is. She is as steady as a rock; and nobody who knows her will ever imagine her to be a party to her father's folly. She may pick and choose a husband any day she pleases. And the men about her won't mind this kind of thing as we should. No doubt all

their friends joke him about it, but no one will think of blaming Polly."

"It can't do her any good," said Gregory.

"It cannot do her any harm. She has a strength of her own that even her father can't lessen."

"All the same, I wish there were an end of it."

"So do I, for my own sake," said Ralph. As he spoke he filled his glass, and passed the bottle, and then was silent for a few moments. "Neefit did help me," he continued, "and I don't want to speak against him; but he is the most pig-headed old fool that ever existed. Nothing will stop him but Polly's marriage, or mine."

"I suppose you will marry soon now. You ought to be married," said Gregory, in a melancholy tone, in which was told something of the disappointment of his own passion.

"Well;—yes. I believe I might as well tell you a little secret, Greg."

"I suppose I can guess it," said Gregory, with still a deeper sound of woe.

"I don't think you can. It is quite possible you may, however. You know Mary Bonner;—don't you?"

The cloud upon the parson's brow was at once lightened. "No," said he. "I have heard of her, of course."

"You have never seen Mary Bonner?"

"I have not been up in town since she came. What should take me up? And if I were there, I doubt whether I should go out to Fulham. What is the use of going?" But still, though he spoke thus, there was something less of melancholy in his voice than when he had first spoken. Ralph did not immediately go on with his story, and his brother now asked a question. "But what of Mary Bonner? Is she to be the future mistress of the Priory?"

"God only knows."

"But you mean to ask her?"

"I have asked her."

"And you are engaged?"

"By no means. I wish I were. You haven't seen her, but I suppose you have heard of her?"

"Ralph spoke of her,—and told me that she was very lovely."

"Upon my word, I don't think that even in a picture I ever saw anything approaching to her beauty. You've seen that thing at Dresden. She is more like that than anything I know. She seems almost too grand for a fellow to speak to, and yet she looks as if she didn't know it. I don't think she does know it." Gregory said not a word, but looked at his brother, listening. "But, by George! there's a dignity about her, a sort of self-possession, a kind of noli

me tangere, you understand, which makes a man almost afraid to come near her. She hasn't sixpence in the world."

"That needn't signify to you now."

"Not in the least. I only just mention it to explain. And her father was nobody in particular,—some old general who used to wear a cocked hat and keep the niggers down out in one of the colonies. She herself talked of coming home here to be a governess ;—by Jove! yes, a governess. Well, to look at her, you'd think she was born a countess in her own right."

"Is she so proud ?"

"No ;—it's not that. I don't know what it is. It's the way her head is put on. Upon my word, to see her turn her neck is the grandest thing in the world. I never saw anything like it. I don't know that she's proud by nature,—though she has got a dash of that too. Don't you know there are some horses show their breeding at a glance ? I don't suppose they feel it themselves ; but there it is on them, like the Hall-mark on silver. I don't know whether you can understand a man being proud of his wife."

"Indeed I can."

"I don't mean of her personal qualities, but of the outside get up. Some men are proud of their wives' clothes, or their jewels, or their false hair. With Mary nothing of that sort could have any effect ; but to see her step, or move her head, or lift her arm, is enough to make a man feel,—feel,—feel that she beats every other woman in the world by chalks."

"And she is to be mistress here ?"

"Indeed she should,—to-morrow, if she'd come."

"You did ask her ?"

"Yes,—I asked her."

"And what did she say ?"

"Nothing that I cared to hear. She had just been told all this accursed story about Polly Neefit. I'll never forgive Sir Thomas,—never." The reader will be pleased to remember that Sir Thomas did not mention Miss Neefit's name, or any of the circumstances of the Neefit contract, to his niece.

"He could hardly have wished to set her against you."

"I don't know ; but he must have told her. She threw it in my teeth that I ought to marry Polly."

"Then she did not accept you ?"

"By George ! no ;—anything but that. She is one of those women who, as I fancy, never take a man at the first offer. It isn't that they mean to shilly and shally and make a fuss, but there's a sort of majesty about them which instinctively declines to yield itself. Unconsciously they feel something like offence at the suggestion that a man should think enough of himself to ask for such a possession. They come to it, after a time."

"And she will come to it, after a time?"

"I didn't mean to say that. I don't intend, however, to give it up." Ralph paused in his story, considering whether he would tell his brother what Mary had confessed to him as to her affection for some one else, but he resolved, at last, that he would say nothing of that. He had himself put less of confidence in that assertion than he did in her rebuke with reference to the other young woman to whom she chose to consider that he owed himself. It was his nature to think rather of what absolutely concerned himself, than of what related simply to her. "I shan't give her up. That's all I can say," he continued. "I'm not the sort of fellow to give things up readily." It did occur to Gregory at that moment that his brother had not shown much self-confidence on that question of giving up the property. "I'm pretty constant when I've set my mind on a thing. I'm not going to let any woman break my heart for me, but I shall stick to it."

He was not going to let any woman break his heart for him! Gregory, as he heard this, knew that his brother regarded him as a man whose heart was broken, and he could not help asking himself whether or not it was good for a man that he should be able to suffer as he suffered, because a woman was fair and yet not fair for him. That his own heart was broken,—broken after the fashion of which his brother was speaking,—he was driven to confess to himself. It was not that he should die, or that his existence would be one long continued hour of misery to him. He could eat and drink, and do his duty and enjoy his life. And yet his heart was broken. He could not piece it so that it should be fit for any other woman. He could not teach himself not to long for that one woman who would not love him. The romance of his life had formed itself there, and there it must remain. In all his solitary walks it was of her that he still thought. Of all the bright castles in the air which he still continued to build, she was ever the mistress. And yet he knew that she would never make him happy. He had absolutely resolved that he would not torment her by another request. But he gave himself no praise for his constancy, looking on himself as being somewhat weak in that he could not overcome his longing. When Ralph declared that he would not break his heart, but that, nevertheless, he would stick to the girl, Gregory envied him, not doubting of his success, and believing that it was to men of this calibre that success in love is generally given. "I hope with all my heart that you may win her," he said.

"I must run my chance like another. There's no 'Veni, vidi, vici,' about it, I can tell you; nor is it likely that there should be with such a girl as Mary Bonner. Fill your glass, old fellow. We needn't sit mumehance because we're thinking of our loves."

"I had thought,——" began Gregory very slowly.

"What did you think?"

"I had thought once that you were thinking of—Clarissa."

"What put that into your head?"

"If you had I should never have said a word, nor fancied any wrong. Of course she'll marry some one. And I don't know why I should ever wish that it should not be you."

"But what made you think of it?"

"Well; I did. It was just a word that Patience said in one of her letters."

"What sort of word?" asked Ralph, with much interest.

"It was nothing, you know. I just misunderstood her. When one is always thinking of a thing everything turns itself that way. I got it into my head that she meant to hint to me that as you and Clary were fond of each other, I ought to forget it all. I made up my mind that I would;—but it is so much easier to make up one's mind than to do it." There came a tear in each eye as he spoke, and he turned his face towards the fire that his brother might not see them. And there they remained hot and oppressive, because he would not raise his hand to rub them away.

"I wonder what it was she said," asked Ralph.

"Oh, nothing. Don't you know how a fellow has fancies?"

"There wasn't anything in it," said Ralph.

"Oh;—of course not."

"Patience might have imagined it," said Ralph. "That's just like such a sister as Patience."

"She's the best woman that ever lived," said Gregory.

"As good as gold," said Ralph. "I don't think, however, I shall very soon forgive Sir Thomas."

"I don't mind saying now that I am glad it is so," said Gregory; "though as regards Clary that seems to be cruel. But I don't think I could have come much here had she become your wife."

"Nothing shall ever separate us, Greg."

"I hope not;—but I don't know whether I could have done it. I almost think that I oughtn't to live where I should see her; and I did fear it at one time."

"She'll come to the parsonage yet, old fellow, if you'll stick to her," said Ralph.

"Never," said Gregory. Then that conversation was over.

CHAPTER XLIII.

ONCE MORE.

AT the end of February Ralph declared his purpose of returning to the Moonbeam, for the rest of the hunting season. "I'm not going to be such an ass," he said to his brother, "as to keep two sets of horses going. I bought my uncle's because it seemed to suit just at the time; and there are the others at Horsball's, because I've not had time to settle down yet. I'll go over for March, and take a couple with me; and, at the end of it, I'll get rid of those I don't like. Then that'll be the end of the Moonbeam, as far as I am concerned." So he prepared to start, and on the evening before he went his brother declared that he would go as far as London with him. "That's all right," said Ralph, "but what's taking you up now?" The parson said that he wanted to get a few things, and to have his hair cut. He shouldn't stay above one night. Ralph asked no more questions, and the two brothers went up to London together.

We fear that Patience Underwood may not have been in all respects a discreet preserver of her sister's secrets. But then there is nothing more difficult of attainment than discretion in the preservation of such mysteries. To keep a friend's secret well the keeper of it should be firmly resolved to act upon it in no way,—not even for the advantage of the owner of it. If it be confided to you as a secret that your friend is about to make his maiden speech in the House, you should not even invite your acquaintances to be in their places, —not if secrecy be the first object. In all things the knowledge should be to you as though you had it not. Great love is hardly capable of such secrecy as this. In the fulness of her love Patience had allowed her father to learn the secret of poor Clary's heart; and in the fulness of her love she had endeavoured to make things smooth at Newton. She had not told the young clergyman that Clarissa had given to his brother that which she could not give to him; but, meaning to do a morsel of service to both of them, if that might be possible, she had said a word or two, with what effect the reader will have seen from the conversation given in the last chapter.

"She'll come to the parsonage yet," Ralph had said; and Gregory in one word had implied his assured conviction that any such coming was a thing not to be hoped for,—an event not even to be regarded as possible. Nevertheless, he made up his mind that he would go up to London,—to have his hair cut. In so making up his mind he did not for a moment believe that it could be of any use to him. He was not quite sure that when in London he would go to Popham Villa. He was quite sure that if he did go to Popham Villa he would make

no further offer to Clarissa. He knew that his journey was foolish, simply the result of an uneasy, restless spirit,—that it would be better for him to remain in his parish and move about among the old women and bed-ridden men; but still he went. He would dine at his club, he said, and perhaps he might go down to Fulham on the following morning. And so the brothers parted. Ralph, as a man of property, with many weighty matters on hand, had, of course, much to do. He desired to inspect some agricultural implements, and a new carriage,—he had ever so many things to say to Carey, the lawyer, and wanted to order new harnesses for the horses. So he went to his club, and played whist all the afternoon.

Gregory, as soon as he had secured a bed at a quiet inn, walked off to Southampton Buildings. From the direct manner in which this was done, it might have been argued that he had come up to London with the purpose of seeing Sir Thomas; but it was not so. He turned his steps towards the place where Clary's father was generally to be found, because he knew not what else to do. As he went he told himself that he might as well leave it alone;—but still he went. Stemm at once told him, with a candour that was almost marvellous, that Sir Thomas was out of town. The hearing of the petition was going on at Percy-cross, and Sir Thomas was there, as a matter of course. Stemm seemed to think it rather odd that an educated man, such as was the Rev. Gregory Newton, should have been unaware that the petition against the late election at Percy-cross was being carried on at this moment. "We've got Serjeant Burnaby, and little Mr. Joram down, to make a fight of it," said Mr. Stemm; "but, as far as I can learn, they might just as well have remained up in town. It's only sending good money after bad." The young parson hardly expressed that interest in the matter which Stemm had expected, but turned away, thinking whether he had not better have his hair cut at once, and then go home.

But he did go to Popham Villa on the same afternoon, and,—such was his fortune,—he found Clarissa alone. Since her father had seen her in bed, and spoken to her of what he had called the folly of her love, she had not again given herself up to the life of a sick-room. She dressed herself and came down to breakfast of a morning, and then would sit with a needle in her hand till she took her book, and then with a book till she took her needle. She tried to work, and tried to read, and perhaps she did accomplish a little of each. And then, when Patience would tell her that exercise was necessary, she would put on her hat and creep out among the paths. She did make some kind of effort to get over the evil that had come upon her; but still no one could watch her and not know that she was a wounded deer. "Miss Clarissa is at home," said the servant, who well knew that the young clergyman was one of the rejected suitors. There

had been hardly a secret in the house in reference to Gregory Newton's love. The two other young ladies, the girl said, had gone to London, but would be home to dinner. Then, with a beating heart, Gregory was ushered into the drawing-room. Clarissa was sitting near the window, with a novel in her lap, having placed herself there with the view of getting what was left of the light of the early spring evening; but she had not read a word for the last quarter of an hour. She was thinking of that word scoundrel, with which her father had spoken of the man she loved. Could it be that he was in truth so bad as that? And, if it were true, would she not take him, scoundrel as he was, if he would come to her? He might be a—scoundrel in that one thing, on that one occasion, and yet be good to her. He might repent his scoundrelism, and she certainly would forgive it. Of one thing she was quite sure;—he had not looked like a scoundrel when he had given her that assurance on the lawn! And so she thought of young men in general. It was very easy to call a young man a scoundrel, and yet to forgive him all his iniquities when it suited to do so. Young men might get in debt, and gamble, and make love wherever they pleased, and all at once,—and yet be forgiven. All these things were very bad. It might be just to call a man a scoundrel because he could not pay his debts, or because he made bets about horses. Young men did a great many things which would be horrid indeed were a girl to do them. Then one papa would call such a man a scoundrel, because he was not wanted to come to the house; while another papa would make him welcome, and give him the best of everything. Ralph Newton might be a scoundrel; but if so,—as Clarissa thought,—there were a great many good-looking scoundrels about in the world, as to whom their scoundrelism did very little to injure them in the esteem of all their friends. It was thus that Clarissa was thinking over her own affairs when Gregory Newton was shown into the room.

The greeting on both sides was at first formal and almost cold. Clary had given a little start of surprise, and had then subsided into a most demure mode of answering questions. Yes; papa was at Percycross. She did not know when he was expected back. Mary and Patience were in London. Yes;—she was at home all alone. No; she had not seen Ralph since his uncle's death. The question which elicited this answer had been asked without any design, and Clary endeavoured to make her reply without emotion. If she displayed any, Gregory, who had his own affairs upon his mind, did not see it. No;—they had not seen the other Mr. Newton as he passed through town. They had all understood that he had been very much disturbed by his father's horrible accident and death. Then Gregory paused in his questions, and Clarissa expressed a hope that there might be no more hunting in the world.

It was very hard work, this conversation, and Gregory was beginning to think that he had done no good by coming, when on a sudden he struck a chord from whence came a sound of music. "Ralph and I have been living together at the Priory," he said.

"Oh ;—indeed ; yes ;—I think I heard Patience say that you were at the Priory."

"I suppose I shall not be telling any secret to you in talking about him and your cousin Mary ?"

Clarissa felt that she was blushing up to her brow, but she made a great effort to compose herself. "Oh, no," she said, "we all know of it."

"I hope he may be successful," said Gregory.

"I do not know. I cannot tell."

"I never knew a man more thoroughly in love than he is."

"I don't believe it," said Clarissa.

"Not believe it ! Indeed you may, Clary. I have never seen her, but from what he says of her I suppose her to be most beautiful."

"She is,—very beautiful." This was said with a strong emphasis.

"And why should you not believe it ?"

"It will not be of the slightest use, Mr. Newton ; and you may tell him so. Though I suppose it is impossible to make a man believe that."

"Are we both so unfortunate ?" he asked.

The poor girl with her wounded love, and every feeling sore within her, had not intended to say anything that should be cruel or injurious to Gregory himself, and it was not till the words were out of her mouth that she herself perceived their effect. "Oh, Mr. Newton, I was only thinking of him," she said, innocently. "I only meant that Ralph is one of those who always think they are to have everything they want."

"I am not one of those, Clarissa. And yet I am one who seem never to be tired of asking for that which is not to be given to me. I said to myself when last I went from here that I would never ask again ;—that I would never trouble you any more." She was sitting with the book in her hand, looking out into the gloom, and now she made no attempt to answer him. "And yet you see here I am," he continued. She was still silent, and her head was still turned away from him ; but he could see that tears were streaming down her cheeks. "I have not the power not to come to you while yet there is a chance," he said. "I can live and work without you, but I can have no life of my own. When I first saw you I made a picture to myself of what my life might be, and I cannot get that moved from before my eyes. I am sorry, however, that my coming should make you weep."

"Oh, Mr. Newton, I am so wretched!" she said, turning round sharply upon him. For a moment she had thought that she would tell him everything, and then she checked herself, and remembered how ill-placed such a confidence would be.

"What should make you wretched, dearest?"

"I do not know. I cannot tell. I sometimes think the world is bad altogether, and that I had better die. People are so cruel and so hard, and things are so wrong. But you may tell your brother that he need not think of my cousin, Mary. Nothing ever would move her. H——sh——. Here they are. Do not say that I was crying."

He was introduced to the beauty, and as the lights came, Clarissa escaped. Yes;—she was indeed most lovely; but as he looked on her, Gregory felt that he agreed with Clarissa that nothing on earth would move her. He remained there for another half-hour; but Clarissa did not return, and then he went back to London.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE PETITION.

THE time for hearing the petition at Percyecross had at length come, and the judge had gone down to that ancient borough. The day fixed was Monday, the 27th, and Parliament had then been sitting for three weeks. Mr. Griffenbottom had been as constant in his place as though there had been no sword hanging over his head; but Sir Thomas had not as yet even taken the oaths. He had made up his mind that he would not even enter the house while this bar against him as a legislator existed, and he had not as yet even been seen in the lobby. His daughters, his colleague, Mr. Trigger, and Stemm had all expostulated with him on the subject, assuring him that he should treat the petition with the greatest contempt, at any rate till it should have proved itself by its success to be a matter not contemptible; but to these counsellors he gave no ear, and when he went down to give his evidence before the judge at Percyecross his seat had as yet availed him nothing.

Mr. Griffenbottom had declared that he would not pay a shilling towards the expense of the petition, maintaining that his own seat was safe, and that any peril incurred had been so incurred simply on behalf of Sir Thomas. Nothing, according to Mr. Griffenbottom's views, could be more unjust than to expect that he should take any part in the matter. Trigger, too, had endeavoured to impress this

upon Sir Thomas more than once or twice. But this had been all in vain; and Sir Thomas, acting under the advice of his own attorney, had at last compelled Mr. Griffenbottom to take his share in the matter. Mr. Griffenbottom did not scruple to say that he was very ill-used, and to hint that any unfair practices which might possibly have prevailed during the last election at Percy-cross, had all been adopted on behalf of Sir Thomas, and in conformity with Sir Thomas's views. It will, therefore, be understood that the two members did not go down to the borough in the best humour with each other. Mr. Trigger still nominally acted for both; but it had been almost avowed that Sir Thomas was to be treated as a Jonah, if by such treatment any salvation might be had for the ship of which Griffenbottom was to be regarded as the captain.

Mr. Westmacott was also in Percy-cross,—and so was Moggs, reinstated in his old room at the Cordwainers' Arms. Moggs had not been summoned, nor was his presence there required for any purpose immediately connected with the inquiry to be made; but Purity and the Rights of Labour may always be advocated; and when better than at a moment in which the impurity of a borough is about to be made the subject of public condemnation? And Moggs, moreover, had now rankling in his bosom a second cause of enmity against the Tories of the borough. Since the election he had learned that his rival, Ralph Newton, was in some way connected with the sitting member, Sir Thomas, and he laid upon Sir Thomas's back the weight of his full displeasure in reference to the proposed marriage with Polly Neefit. He had heard that Polly had raised some difficulty,—had, indeed, rejected her aristocratic suitor, and was therefore not without hope; but he had been positively assured by Neefit himself that the match would be made, and was consequently armed with a double purpose in his desire to drive Sir Thomas ignominiously out of Percy-cross.

Sir Thomas had had more than one interview with Serjeant Burnaby and little Mr. Joram, than whom two more astute barristers in such matters were not to be found at that time practising,—though perhaps at that time the astuteness of the Serjeant was on the wane; while that of Jacky Joram, as he was familiarly called, was daily rising in repute. Sir Thomas himself, barrister and senior to these two gentlemen, had endeavoured to hold his own with them, and to impress on them the conviction that he had nothing to conceal; that he had personally endeavoured, as best he knew how, to avoid corruption, and that if there had been corruption on the part of his own agents, he was himself ready to be a party in proclaiming it. But he found himself to be absolutely ignored and put out of court by his own counsel. They were gentlemen with whom professionally he had had no intercourse, as he had practised at the Chancery, and

they at the Common Law Bar. But he had been Solicitor-General, and was a bencher of his Inn, whereas Serjeant Burnaby was only a Serjeant, and Jacky Joram still wore a stuff gown. Nevertheless, he found himself to be "nowhere" in discussing with them the circumstances of the election. Even Joram, whom he seemed to remember having seen only the other day as an ugly shame-faced boy about the courts, treated him, not exactly with indignity, but with patronising good-nature, listening with an air of half-attention to what he said, and then not taking the slightest heed of a word of it. Who does not know this transparent pretence of courtesies, which of all discourtesies is the most offensive? "Ah, just so, Sir Thomas; just so. And now, Mr. Trigger, I suppose Mr. Puffer's account hasn't yet been settled." Any word from Mr. Trigger was of infinitely greater value with Mr. Joram than all Sir Thomas's protestations. Sir Thomas could not keep himself from remembering that Jacky Joram's father was a cheesemonger at Gloucester, who had married the widow of a Jew with a little money. Twenty times Sir Thomas made up his mind to retire from the business altogether; but he always found himself unable to do so. When he mentioned the idea, Griffenbottom flung up his hands in dismay at such treachery on the part of an ally,—such treachery and such cowardice! What! —had not he, Sir Thomas, forced him, Griffenbottom, into all this ruinous expenditure? And now to talk of throwing up the sponge! It was in vain that Sir Thomas explained that he had forced nobody into it. It was manifestly the case that he had refused to go on with it by himself, and on this Mr. Griffenbottom and Mr. Trigger insisted so often and with so much strength that Sir Thomas felt himself compelled to stand to his guns, bad as he believed those guns to be.

If Sir Thomas meant to retreat, why had he not retreated when a proposition to that effect was made to him at his own chambers? Of all the weak, vacillating, ill-conditioned men that Mr. Griffenbottom had ever been concerned with, Sir Thomas Underwood was the weakest, most vacillating, and most ill-conditioned. To have to sit in the same boat with such a man was the greatest misfortune that had ever befallen Mr. Griffenbottom in public life. Mr. Griffenbottom did not exactly say these hard things in the hearing of Sir Thomas, but he so said them that they became the common property of the Jorams, Triggers, Spiveycombs, and Spicers; and were repeated piecemeal to the unhappy second member.

He had secured for himself a separate sitting-room at the "Percy Standard," thinking that thus he would have the advantage of being alone; but every one connected with his party came in and out of his room as though it had been specially selected as a chamber for public purposes. Even Griffenbottom came into it to have interviews

there with Trigger, although at the moment Griffenbottom and Sir Thomas were not considered to be on speaking terms. Griffenbottom in these matters seemed to have the hide of a rhinoceros. He had chosen to quarrel with Sir Thomas. He had declared that he would not speak to a colleague whose Parliamentary ideas and habits were so repulsive to him. He had said quite aloud, that Trigger had never made a greater mistake in his life than in bringing Sir Thomas to the borough, and that, let the petition go as it would, Sir Thomas should never be returned for the borough again. He had spoken all these things, almost in the hearing of Sir Thomas. And yet he would come to Sir Thomas's private room, and sit there half the morning with a cigar in his mouth! Mr. Pile would come in, and make most unpleasant speeches. Mr. Spicer called continually, with his own ideas about the borough. The thing could be still saved if enough money were spent. If Mr. Givantake were properly handled, and Mr. O'Blather duly provided for, the two witnesses upon whom the thing really hung would not be found in Percy-cross when called upon to-morrow. That was Mr. Spicer's idea; and he was very eager to communicate it to Serjeant Burnaby. Trigger, in his energy, told Mr. Spicer to go and be _____. All this occurred in Sir Thom^a's private room. And then Mr. Pabsby was there constantly, till he at last was turned out by Trigger. In his agony, Sir Thomas asked for another sitting-room; but was informed that the house was full. The room intended for the two members was occupied by Griffen-bottom; but nobody ever suggested that the party might meet there when Sir Thomas's vain request was made for further accommodation. Griffenbottom went on with his cigar, and Mr. Pile sat picking his teeth before the fire, and making unpleasant little speeches.

The judge, who had hurried into Percy-cross from another town, and who opened the commission on the Monday evening, did not really begin his work till the Tuesday morning. Jacky Joram had declared that the inquiry would last three days, he having pledged himself to be at another town early on the following Friday. Serjeant Burnaby, whose future services were not in such immediate demand, was of opinion that they would not get out of Percy-cross till Saturday night. Judge Crumbie, who was to try the case, and who had been trying similar cases ever since Christmas, was not due at his next town till the Monday; but it was understood by everybody that he intended if possible to spend his Saturday and Sunday in the bosom of his family. Trigger, however, had magnificent ideas. "I believe we shall carry them into the middle of next week," he said, "if they choose to go on with it." Trigger thoroughly enjoyed the petition; and even Griffenbottom, who was no longer troubled by gout, and was not now obliged to walk about the borough, did not seem to dislike it. But to poor Sir Thomas it was indeed a purgatory.

The sitting members were of course accused, both as regarded themselves and their agents, of every crime known in electioneering tactics. Votes had been personated. Votes had been bought. Votes had been obtained by undue influence on the part of masters and landlords, and there had been treating of the most pernicious and corrupt description. As to the personating of votes, that according to Mr. Trigger, had been merely introduced as a pleasant commencing fiction common in Parliamentary petitions. There had been nothing of the kind, and nobody supposed that there had, and it did not signify. Of undue influence,—what purists choose to call undue influence,—there had of course been plenty. It was not likely that masters paying thousands a year in wages were going to let these men vote against themselves. But this influence was so much a matter of course that it could not be proved to the injury of the sitting members. Such at least was Mr. Trigger's opinion. Mr. Spicer might have been a little imprudent with his men; but no case could be brought up in which a man had been injured. Undue influence at Percy-cross was—"gammon." So said Mr. Trigger, and Jacky Joram agreed with Mr. Trigger. Serjeant Burnaby rubbed his hands, and would give no opinion till he had heard the evidence. That votes had been bought during the day of the election there was no doubt or earth. On this matter great secrecy prevailed, and Sir Thomas could not get a word spoken in his own hearing. It was admitted, however, that votes had been bought. There were a dozen men, perhaps more than a dozen, who would prove that one Glump had paid them ten shillings a piece between one and two on the day of the election. There was a general belief that perhaps over a hundred had been bought at that rate. But Trigger was ready to swear that he did not know whence Glump had got the money, and Glump himself was,—nobody knew where Glump was, but strange whispers respecting Glump were floating about the borough. Trigger was disposed to believe that they, on their side, could prove that Glump had really been employed by Westmacott's people to vitiate the election. He was quite sure that nothing could connect Glump with him as an agent on behalf of Griffenbottom and Underwood. So Mr. Trigger asserted with the greatest confidence; but what was in the bottom of Mr. Trigger's mind on this subject no one pretended to know. As for Glump himself he was a man who would certainly take payment from anybody for any dirty work. It was the general impression through the borough that Glump had on this occasion been hired by Trigger, and Trigger certainly enjoyed the prestige which was thus conferred upon him.

As to the treating,—there could be no doubt about that. There had been treating. The idea of conducting an election at Percy-cross without beer seemed to be absurd to every male and female Percy-

crossian. Of course the publicans would open their taps and then send in their bills for beer to the electioneering agents. There was a prevailing feeling that any interference with so ancient a practice was not only un-English, but unjust also ;—that it was beyond the power of Parliament to enforce any law so abominable and unnatural. Trigger was of opinion that though there had been a great deal of beer, no attempt would be made to prove that votes had been influenced by treating. There had been beer on both sides, and Trigger hoped sincerely that there might always be beer on both sides as long as Percyross was a borough.

Sir Thomas found that his chance of success was now spoken of in a tone very different from that which had been used when the matter was discussed in his own chamber. He had been then told that it was hardly possible that he should keep his seat ;—and he had in fact been asked to resign it. Though sick enough of Percyross, this he would not do in the manner then proposed to him. Now he was encouraged in the fight ;—but the encouragement was of a nature which gave him no hope, which robbed him even of the wish to have a hope. It was all dirt from beginning to end. Whatever might be the verdict of the judge,—from the judge the verdict was now to come,—he should still believe that nothing short of absolute disfranchisement would meet the merits of the case.

The accusation with regard to the personation of votes was abandoned,—Serjeant Burnaby expressing the most extreme disgust that any such charge should have been made without foundation,—although he himself at the borough which he had last left had brought forward the same charge on behalf of his then clients, and had abandoned it in the same way. Then the whole of the remaining hours of the Tuesday and half the Wednesday were passed in showing that Messrs. Spicer, Spiveycomb, and Roodiland had forced their own men to vote blue. Mr. Spicer had dismissed one man and Mr. Spiveycomb two men; but both these gentlemen swore that the men dismissed were not worth their salt, and had been sent adrift upon the world by no means on account of their politics. True: they had all voted for Moggs; but then they had done that simply to spite their late master. On the middle of Wednesday, when the matter of intimidation had been completed,—the result still lying in the bosom of Baron Crumbie,—Mr. Trigger thought that things were looking up. That was the report which he brought to Mr. Griffen-bottom, who was smoking his midday cigar in Sir Thomas's arm-chair, while Sir Thomas was endeavouring to master the first book of Lord Verulam's later treatise “*De dignitate scientiarum*,” seated in a cane-bottomed chair in a very small bed-room up-stairs.

By consent the question of treating came next. Heaven and earth were being moved to find Glump. When the proposition was made

that the treating should come before the bribery Trigger stated in court that he was himself doing his very best to find the man. There might yet be a hope, though, alas, the hope was becoming slighter every hour. His own idea was that Glump had been sent away to Holland by,—well, he did not care to name the parties by whom he believed that Glump had been expatriated. However, there might be a chance. The counsel on the other side remarked that there might, indeed, be a chance. Baron Crumbie expressed a hope that Mr. Glump might make his appearance,—for the sake of the borough, which might otherwise fare badly; and then the great beer question was discussed for two entire days.

There was no doubt about the beer. Trigger, who was examined after some half-score of publicans, said openly that thirsty Conservative souls had been allowed to slake their drought at the joint expense of the Conservative party in the borough,—as thirsty Liberal souls had been encouraged to do on the other side. When reminded that any malpractice in that direction on the part of a beaten candidate could not affect the status of the elected members, he replied that all the beer consumed in Pereycross during the election had not, to the best of his belief, affected a vote. The Percyrossians were not men to vote this way or that because of beer! He would not believe it even in regard to a Liberal Percyrossian. It might be so in other boroughs, but of other boroughs he knew absolutely nothing. Who paid for the beer? Mr. Trigger at once acknowledged that it was paid for out of the general funds provided for the election. Who provided those funds? There was not a small amount of fencing on this point, during the course of which Mr. Joram snapped very sharply and very frequently at the counsel on the other side,—hoping thereby somewhat to change the issue. But at last there came out these two facts, that there was a general fund, to which all Conservatives might subscribe, and that the only known subscribers to this fund were Mr. Griffenbottom, Sir Thomas Underwood, and old Mr. Pile, who had given a £10 note,—apparently with the view of proving that there was a fund. It was agreed on all hands that treating had been substantiated; but it was remarked by some that Baron Crumbie had not been hard upon treating in other boroughs. After all, the result would depend upon what the Baron thought about Mr. Glump. It might be that he would recommend further inquiry, under a special commission, into the practices of the borough, because of the Glump iniquities, and that he should, nevertheless, leave the seats to the sitting members. That seemed to be Mr. Trigger's belief on the evening of the Thursday, as he took his brandy and water in Sir Thomas's private sitting-room.

There is nothing in the world so brisk as the ways and manners of lawyers when in any great case they come to that portion of it

which they know to be the real bone of the limb and kernel of the nut. The doctor is very brisk when after a dozen moderately dyspeptic patients he comes on some unfortunate gentleman whose gastric apparatus is gone altogether. The parson is very brisk when he reaches the minatory clause in his sermon. The minister is very brisk when he asks the House for a vote, telling his hoped-for followers that this special point is absolutely essential to his government. Unless he can carry this, he and all those hanging on to him must vacate their places. The horse-dealer is very brisk when, after four or five indifferent lots, he bids his man bring out from the stable the last thorough-bred that he bought, and the very best that he ever put his eye on. But the briskness of none of these is equal to the briskness of the barrister who has just got into his hands for cross-examination him whom we may call the centre witness of a great case. He plumes himself like a bullfinch going to sing. He spreads himself like a peacock on a lawn. He perches himself like a sparrow on a paling. He crows amidst his attorneys and all the satellites of the court like a cock among his hens. He puts his hands this way and that, settling even the sunbeams as they enter, lest a moth should disturb his intellect or dull the edge of his subtlety. There is a modesty in his eye, a quiescence in his lips, a repose in his limbs, under which lie half-concealed,—not at all concealed from those who have often watched him at his work,—the glance, the tone, the spring, which are to tear that unfortunate witness into pieces, without infringing any one of those conventional rules which have been laid down for the guidance of successful well-mannered barristers.

Sergeant Burnaby, though astute, was not specially brisk by nature; but on this Friday morning Mr. Joram was very brisk indeed. There was a certain Mr. Cavity, who had acted as agent for Westmacott, and who,—if anybody on the Westmacott side had been so guilty,—had been guilty in the matter of Glump's absence. Perhaps we should not do justice to Mr. Joram's acuteness were we to imagine him as believing that Glump was absent under other influence than that used on behalf of the conservative side; but there were subsidiary points on which Mr. Cavity might be made to tell tales. Of course there had been extensive bribery for years past in Percyross on the liberal as well as on the conservative side, and Mr. Joram thought that he could make Mr. Cavity tell a tale. And then, too, he could be very brisk in that affair of Glump. He was pretty nearly sure that Mr. Glump could not be connected by evidence with either of the sitting members or with any of their agents. He would prove that Glump was neutral ground, and that as such his services could not be traced to his friend, Mr. Trigger. Mr. Joram on this occasion was very brisk indeed.

A score of men were brought up, ignorant, half-dumb, heavy-browed men, all dressed in the amphibious garb of out-o'-door town labourers,—of whom there exists a class of hybrids between the rural labourer and the artizan,—each one of whom acknowledged that after noon on the election day he received ten shillings, with instructions to vote for Griffenbottom and Underwood. And they did vote for Griffenbottom and Underwood. At all elections in Percy-cross they had, as they now openly acknowledged, waited till about the same hour on the day of election, and then somebody had bought their votes for somebody. On this occasion the purchase had been made by Mr. Glump. There was a small empty house up a little alley in the town, to which there was a back door opening on a vacant space in the town known as Grinder's Green. They entered this house by one door, leaving it by the other, and as they passed through, Glump gave to each man half a sovereign with instructions, entering their names in a small book ;—and then they went in a body and voted for Griffenbottom and Underwood. Each of the twenty knew nearly all the other twenty, but none of them knew any other men who had been paid by Glump. Of course none of them had the slightest knowledge of Glump's present abode. It was proved that at the last election Glump had acted for the Liberals ; but it was also proved that at the election before he had been active in bribing for the Conservatives. Very many things were proved,—if a thing be proved when supported by testimony on oath. Trigger proved that twenty votes alone could have been of no service, and would not certainly have been purchased in a manner so detrimental. According to Trigger's views it was as clear as daylight that Glump had not been paid by them. When asked whether he would cause Mr. Glump to be repaid that sum of ten pounds, should Mr. Glump send in any bill to that effect, he simply stated that Mr. Glump would certainly send no such bill to him. He was then asked whether it might not be possible that the money should be repaid by Messrs. Griffenbottom and Underwood through his hands, reaching Glump again by means of a further middleman. Mr. Trigger acknowledged that were such a claim made upon him by any known agent of his party, he would endeavour to pass the ten pounds through the accounts, as he thought that there should be a certain feeling of honour in these things ; but he did not for a moment think that any one acting with him would have dealings with Glump. On the Saturday morning, when the case was still going on, to the great detriment of Baron Crumble's domestic happiness, Glump had not yet been caught. It seemed that the man had no wife, no relative, no friend. The woman at whose house he lodged declared that he often went and came after this fashion. The respect with which Glump's name was mentioned, as his persistency in disobeying the law and his capability for

intrigue were thus proved, was so great, that it was a pity he could not have been there to enjoy it. For the hour he was a great man in Percyecross,—and the greater because Baron Crumbie did not cease to threaten him with terrible penalties.

Much other bribery was alleged, but none other was distinctly brought home to the agents of the sitting members. As to bringing bribery home to Mr. Griffenbottom himself;—that appeared to be out of the question. Nobody seemed even to wish to do that. The judge, as it appeared, did not contemplate any result so grave and terrible as that. There was a band of freemen of whom it was proved that they had all been treated with most excessive liberality by the corporation of the town ; and it was proved, also, that a majority of the corporation were supporters of Mr. Griffenbottom. A large number of votes had been so secured. Such, at least, was the charge made by the petitioners. But this allegation Jacky Joram laughed to scorn. The corporation, of course, used the charities and privileges of the town as they thought right ; and the men voted,—as they thought right. The only cases of bribery absolutely proved were those manipulated by Glump, and nothing had been adduced clearly connecting Glump and the Griffenbottomites. Mr. Trigger was in ecstasies ; but Mr. Joram somewhat repressed him by referring to these oracular words which had fallen from the Baron in respect to the corporation. “A corporation may be guilty as well as an individual,” the Baron had said. Jacky Joram had been very eager in assenting to the Baron, but in asserting at the same time that the bribery must be proved. “It won’t be assumed, my lord, that a corporation has bribed because it has political sympathies.” “It should have none,” said the Baron. “Human nature is human nature, my lord,—even in corporations,” said Jacky Joram. This took place just before luncheon,—which was made a solemn meal on all sides, as the judge had declared his intention of sitting till midnight, if necessary.

Immediately after the solemn meal Mr. Griffenbottom was examined. It had been the declared purpose of the other side to turn Mr. Griffenbottom inside out. Mr. Griffenbottom and his conduct had on various former occasions been the subject of parliamentary petitions under the old form ; but on such occasions the chief delinquent himself was never examined. Now Mr. Griffenbottom would be made to tell all that he knew, not only of his present, but of his past, iniquities. And yet Mr. Griffenbottom told very little ; and it certainly did seem to the bystanders, that even the opposing counsel, even the judge on the bench, abstained from their prey because he was a member of Parliament. It was notorious to all the world that Griffenbottom had debased the borough ; had so used its venal tendencies as to make that systematic which had before been

too frequent indeed, but yet not systematized ; that he had trained the rising generation of Percycross politicians to believe in political corruption ;—and yet he escaped that utter turning inside out of which men had spoken.

The borough had cost him a great deal of money certainly ; but as far as he knew the money had been spent legally. It had at least always been his intention before an election was commenced that nothing illegal should be done. He had no doubt always afterwards paid sums of money the use of which he did not quite understand, and as to some of which he could not but fear that it had been doubtfully applied. The final accounts as to the last election had not reached him, but he did not expect to be charged with improper expenses. There no doubt would be something for beer, but that was unavoidable. As to Mr. Glump he knew literally nothing of the man,—nor had he wanted any such man's assistance. Twenty votes indeed ! Let them look at his place upon the poll. There had been a time in the day when twenty votes this way or that might be necessary to Sir Thomas. He had been told that it was so. On the day of the election his own position on the poll had been so certain to him, that he should not have cared,—that is, for himself,—had he heard that Glump was buying votes against him. He considered it to be quite out of the question that Glump should have bought votes for him,—with any purpose of serving him. And so Mr. Griffenbottom escaped from the adverse counsel and from the judge.

There was very little in the examination of Sir Thomas Underwood to interest any one. No one really suspected him of corrupt practices. In all such cases the singular part of the matter is that everybody, those who are concerned and those who are not concerned, really know the whole truth which is to be investigated ; and yet, that which everybody knows cannot be substantiated. There were not five men in court who were not certain that Griffenbottom was corrupt, and that Sir Thomas was not ; that the borough was rotten as a six-months-old egg ; that Glump had acted under one of Trigger's aides-de-camp ; that intimidation was the law of the borough ; and that beer was used so that men drunk might not fear that which sober they had not the courage to encounter. All this was known to everybody ; and yet, up to the last, it was thought by many in Percycross that corruption, acknowledged, transparent, egregious corruption, would prevail even in the presence of a judge. Mr. Trigger believed it to the last.

But it was not so thought by the Jacky Jorams or by the Serjeant Burnabys. They made their final speeches,—the leading lawyer on each side, but they knew well what was coming. At half-past seven, for to so late an hour had the work been continued, the judge retired

to get a cup of tea, and returned at eight to give his award. It was as follows :—

As to the personation of votes, there should have been no allegation made. In regard to the charge of intimidation it appeared that the system prevailed to such an extent as to make it clear to him that Percyross was unfit to return representatives to Parliament. In the matter of treating he was not quite prepared to say that had no other charge been made he should have declared this election void, but of that also there had been sufficient to make him feel it to be his duty to recommend to the Speaker of the House of Commons that further inquiry should be made as to the practices of the borough. And as to direct bribery, though he was not prepared to say that he could connect the agents of the members with what had been done,—and certainly he could not connect either of the two members themselves,—still, quite enough had been proved to make it imperative upon him to declare the election void. This he should do in his report to the Speaker, and should also advise that a commission be held with the view of ascertaining whether the privilege of returning members of Parliament should remain with the borough. With Griffen-bottom he dealt as tenderly as he did with Sir Thomas, sending them both forth to the world, unseated indeed, but as innocent, injured men.

There was a night train up to London at 10 p.m., by which on that evening Sir Thomas Underwood travelled, shaking off from his feet as he entered the carriage the dust of that most iniquitous borough.

CHAPTER XLV.

"NEVER GIVE A THING UP."

MR. NEEFIT'S conduct during this period of disappointment was not exactly what it should to have been, either in the bosom of his family or among his dependents in Conduit Street. Herr Bawwah, over a pot of beer in the public-house opposite, suggested to Mr. Waddle that "the governor might be —," in a manner that affected Mr. Waddle greatly. It was an eloquent and energetic expression of opinion,—almost an expression of a settled purpose as coming from the German as it did come; and Waddle was bound to admit that cause had been given. "Fritz," said Waddle pathetically, "don't think about it. You can't better the wages." Herr Bawwah looked up from his pot of beer and muttered a German oath. He had been told that he was beastly, skulking, pig-headed, obstinate, drunken, with some other perhaps stronger epithets which may be omitted,—and he had been told that he was a German. In that had lain the venom. There was the word that rankled. He had another pot of beer, and though it was then only twelve o'clock on a Monday morning Herr Bawwah swore that he was going to make a day of it, and that old Neefit might cut out the stuff for himself if he pleased. As they were now at the end of March, which is not a busy time of the year in Mr. Neefit's trade, the great artist's defalcation was of less immediate importance; but, as Waddle knew, the German was given both to beer and obstinacy when aroused to wrath; and what would become of the firm should the obstinacy continue?

"Where's that pig-headed German brute?" asked Mr. Neefit, when Mr. Waddle returned to the establishment. Mr. Waddle made no reply; and when Neefit repeated the question with a free use of the epithets previously omitted by us, Waddle still was dumb, leaning over his ledger as though in that there were matters so great as to absorb his powers of hearing. "The two of you may go and be — together!" said Mr. Neefit. If any order requiring immediate obedience were contained in this, Mr. Waddle disobeyed that order. He still bent himself over the ledger, and was dumb. Waddle had been trusted with his master's private view in the matter of the Newton marriage, and felt that on this account he owed a debt of forbearance to the unhappy father.

The breeches-maker was in truth very unhappy. He had accused his German assistant of obstinacy, but the German could hardly have been more obstinate than his master. Mr. Neefit had set his heart

upon making his daughter Mrs. Newton, and had persisted in declaring that the marriage should be made to take place. The young man had once given him a promise, and should be compelled to keep the promise so given. And in these days Mr. Neefit seemed to have lost that discretion for which his friends had once given him credit. On the occasion of his visit to the Moonbeam early in the hunting season he had spoken out very freely among the sportsmen there assembled; and from that time all reticence respecting his daughter seemed to have been abandoned. He had paid the debts of this young man, who was now lord of wide domains, when the young man hadn't "a red copper in his pocket,"—so did Mr. Neefit explain the matter to his friends,—and he didn't intend that the young man should be off his bargain. "No;—he wasn't going to put up with that;—not if he knew it." All this he declared freely to his general acquaintance. He was very eloquent on the subject in a personal interview which he had with Mr. Moggs senior, in consequence of a visit made to Hendon by Mr. Moggs junior, during which he feared that Polly had shown some tendency towards yielding to the young politician. Mr. Moggs senior might take this for granted;—that if Moggs junior made himself master of Polly, it would be of Polly pure and simple, of Polly without a shilling of dowry. "He'll have to take her in her smock." That was the phrase in which Mr. Neefit was pleased to express his resolution. To all of which Mr. Moggs senior answered never a word. It was on returning from Mr. Moggs's establishment in Bond Street to his own in Conduit Street that Mr. Neefit made himself so very unpleasant to the unfortunate German. When Ontario put on his best clothes, and took himself out to Hendon on the previous Sunday, he did not probably calculate that, as one consequence of that visit, the Herr Bawwah would pass a whole week of intoxication in the little back parlour of the public-house near St. George's Church.

It may be imagined how very unpleasant all this must have been to Miss Neefit herself. Poor Polly indeed suffered many things; but she bore them with an admirable and a persistent courage. Indeed, she possessed a courage which greatly mitigated her sufferings. Let her father be as indiscreet as he might, he could not greatly lower her, as long as she herself was prudent. It was thus that Polly argued with herself. She knew her own value, and was not afraid that she should ever lack a lover when she wanted to find a husband. Of course it was not a nice thing to be thrown at a man's head, as her father was constantly throwing her at the head of young Newton; but such a man as she would give herself to at last would understand all that. Ontario Moggs, could she ever bring herself to accept Ontario, would not be less devoted to her because of her father's ill-arranged ambition. Polly could be obstinate too, but with her

obstinacy there was combined a fund of feminine strength which, as we think, quite justified the devotion of Ontario Moggs.

Amidst all these troubles Mrs. Neefit also had a bad time of it; so bad a time that she was extremely anxious that Ontario should at once carry off the prize;—Ontario, or the gasfitter, or almost anybody. Neefit was taking to drink in the midst of all this confusion, and was making himself uncommonly unpleasant in the bosom of his family. On the Sunday,—the Sunday before the Monday on which the Herr decided that his wisest course of action would be to abstain from work and make a beast of himself, in order that he might spite his master,—Mr. Neefit had dined at one o'clock, and had insisted on his gin-and-water and pipe immediately after his dinner. Now Mr. Neefit, when he took too much, did not fall into the extreme sins which disgraced his foreman. He simply became very cross till he fell asleep, very heavy while sleeping, and more cross than ever when again awake. While he was asleep on this Sunday afternoon Ontario Moggs came down to Hendon dressed in his Sunday best. Mrs. Neefit whispered a word to him before he was left alone with Polly. "You be round with her, and run your chance about the money." "Mrs. Neefit," said Ontario, laying his hand upon his heart, "all the bullion in the Bank of England don't make a feather's weight in the balance." "You never was mercenary, Mr. Ontario," said the lady. "My sweetheart is to me more than a coined hemisphere," said Ontario. The expression may have been absurd, but the feeling was there.

Polly was not at all coy of her presence,—was not so, though she had been specially ordered by her father not to have anything to say to that long-legged, ugly fool. "Handsome is as handsome does," Polly had answered. Whereupon Mr. Neefit had shown his teeth and growled;—but Polly, though she loved her father, and after a fashion respected him, was not afraid of him; and now, when her mother left her alone with Ontario, she was free enough of her conversation. "Oh, Polly," he said, after a while, "you know why I'm here."

"Yes; I know," said Polly.

"I don't think you do care for that young gentleman."

"I'm not going to break my heart about him, Mr. Moggs."

"I'd try to be the death of him, if you did."

"That would be a right down tragedy, because then you'd be hung,—and so there'd be an end of us all. I don't think I'd do that, Mr. Moggs."

"Polly, I sometimes feel as though I didn't know what to do."

"Tell me the whole story of how you went on down at Percy-cross. I was so anxious you should get in."

"Were you now?"

"Right down sick at heart about it;—that I was. Don't you think we should all be proud to know a member of Parliament?"

"Oh; if that's all——"

"I shouldn't think anything of Mr. Newton for being in Parliament. Whether he was in Parliament or out would be all the same. Of course he's a friend, and we like him very well; but his being in Parliament would be nothing. But if you were there——!"

"I don't know what's the difference," said Moggs despondently.

"Because you're one of us."

"Yes; I am," said Moggs, rising to his legs and preparing himself for an oration on the rights of labour. "I thank my God that I am no aristocrat." Then there came upon him a feeling that this was not a time convenient for political fervour. "But, I'll tell you something, Polly," he said, interrupting himself.

"Well;—tell me something, Mr. Moggs."

"I'd sooner have a kiss from you than be Prime Minister."

"Kisses mean so much, Mr. Moggs," said Polly.

"I mean them to mean much," said Ontario Moggs. Whereupon Polly, declining further converse on that delicate subject, and certainly not intending to grant the request made on the occasion, changed the subject.

"But you will get in still;—won't you, Mr. Moggs? They tell me that those other gentlemen ain't to be members any longer, because what they did was unfair. Oughtn't that to make you member?"

"I think it ought, if the law was right;—but it doesn't."

"Doesn't it now? But you'll try again;—won't you? Never give a thing up, Mr. Moggs, if you want it really." As the words left her lips she understood their meaning,—the meaning in which he must necessarily take them,—and she blushed up to her forehead. Then she laughed as she strove to recall the encouragement she had given him. "You know what I mean, Mr. Moggs. I don't mean any silly nonsense about being in love."

"If that is silly, I am the silliest man in London."

"I think you are sometimes;—so I tell you fairly."

In the meantime Mr. Neefit had woken from his slumbers. He was in his old arm-chair in the little back room, where they had dined, while Polly with her lover was in the front parlour. Mrs. Neefit was seated opposite to Mr. Neefit, with an open Bible in her lap, which had been as potent for sleep with her as had been the gin-and-water with her husband. Neefit suddenly jumped up and growled. "Where's Polly?" he demanded.

"She's in the parlour, I suppose," said Mrs. Neefit doubtfully.

"And who is with her?"

"Nobody as hadn't ought to be," said Mrs. Neefit.

"Who's there, I say?" But without waiting for an answer, he stalked into the front room. "It's no use in life your coming here," he said, addressing himself at once to Ontario; "not the least. She ain't for you. She's for somebody else. Why can't one word be as good as a thousand?" Moggs stood silent, looking sheepish and confounded. It was not that he was afraid of the father; but that he feared to offend the daughter should he address the father roughly. "If she goes against me she'll have to walk out of the house with just what she's got on her back."

"I should be quite contented," said Ontario.

"But I shouldn't;—so you may just cut it. Anybody who wants her without my leave must take her in her smock."

"Oh, father!" screamed Polly.

"That's what I mean,—so let's have done with it. What business have you coming to another man's house when you're not welcome? When I want you I'll send for you; and till I do you have my leave to stay away."

"Good-bye, Polly," said Ontario, offering the girl his hand.

"Good-bye, Mr. Moggs," said Polly; "and mind you get into Parliament. You stick to it, and you'll do it."

When she repeated this salutary advice, it must have been that she intended to apply to the double event. Moggs at any rate took it in that light. "I shall," said he, as he opened the door and walked triumphantly out of the house.

"Father," said Polly, as soon as they were alone, "you've behaved very bad to that young man."

"You be blowed," said Mr. Neefit.

"You have, then. You'll go on till you get me that talked about that I shall be ashamed to show myself. What's the good of me trying to behave, if you keep going on like that?"

"Why didn't you take that chap when he came after you down to Margate?"

"Because I didn't choose. I don't care enough for him; and it's all no use of you going on. I wouldn't have him if he came twenty times. I've made up my mind, so I tell you."

"You're a very grand young woman."

"I'm grand enough to have a will of my own about that. I'm not going to be made to marry any man, I know."

"And you mean to take that long-legged shoemaker's apprentice."

"He's not a shoemaker's apprentice any more than I'm a breeches-maker's apprentice." Polly was now quite in earnest, and in no mood for picking her words. "He is a bootmaker by his trade; and I've never said anything about taking him."

"You've given him a promise."

"No; I've not."

"And you'd better not, unless you want to walk out of this house with nothing but the rags on your back. Ain't I doing it all for you? Ain't I been sweating my life out these thirty years to make you a lady?" This was hard upon Polly, as she was not yet one-and-twenty.

"I don't want to be a lady; no more than I am just by myself, like. If I can't be a lady without being made one, I won't be a lady at all."

"You be blowed."

"There are different kinds of ladies, father. I want to be such a one as neither you nor mother shall ever have cause to say I didn't behave myself."

"You'd talk the figures off a milestone," said Mr. Neefit, as he returned to his arm-chair, to his gin-and-water, to his growlings, and before long to his slumbers. Throughout the whole evening he was very unpleasant in the bosom of his family,—which consisted on this occasion of his wife only, as Polly took the opportunity of going out to drink tea with a young lady friend. Neefit, when he heard this, suggested that Ontario was drinking tea at the same house, and would have pursued his daughter but for mingled protestations and menaces which his wife used for preventing such a violation of parental authority. "Moggs don't know from Adam where she is; and you never knowed her do anything of that kind. And you'll go about with your mad schemes and jealousies till you about ruin the poor girl; that's what you will. I won't have it. If you go, I'll go too, and I'll shame you. No; you shan't have your hat. Of course she'll be off some day, if you make the place that wretched that she can't live in it. I know I would,—with the fust man as'd ask me." By these objurgations, by a pertinacious refusal as to his hat, and a little yielding in the matter of gin-and-water, Mr. Neefit was at length persuaded to remain at home.

On the following morning he said nothing before he left home, but as soon as he had opened his letters and spoken a few sharp things to the two men in Conduit Street, he went off to Mr. Moggs senior. Of the interview between Mr. Neefit and Mr. Moggs senior sufficient has already been told. Then it was, after his return to his own shop, that he so behaved as to drive the German artist into downright mutiny and unlimited beer. Through the whole afternoon he snarled at Waddle; but Waddle sat silent, bending over the ledger. One question Waddle did answer.

"Where's that pig-headed German gone?" asked Mr. Neefit for the tenth time.

"I believe he's cutting his throat about this time," said Mr. Waddle.

"He may wait till I come and sew it up," said the breeches-maker.

All this time Mr. Neefit was very unhappy. He knew, as well as did Mr. Waddle or Polly, that he was misbehaving himself. He was by no means deficient in ideas of duty to his wife, to his daughter, and to his dependents. Polly was the apple of his eye; his one jewel;—in his estimation the best girl that ever lived. He admired her in all her moods, even though she would sometimes oppose his wishes with invincible obstinacy. He knew in his heart that were she to marry Ontario Moggs he would forgive her on the day of her marriage. He could not keep himself from forgiving her though she were to marry a chimney-sweep. But, as he thought, a great wrong was being done him. He could not bring himself to believe that Polly would not marry the young Squire, if the young Squire would only be true to his undertaking; and then he could not endure that the young Squire should escape from him, after having been, as it were, saved from ruin by his money, without paying for the accommodation in some shape. He had some inkling of an idea that in punishing Ralph by making public the whole transaction, he would be injuring his daughter as much as he injured Ralph. But the inkling did not sufficiently establish itself in his mind to cause him to desist. Ralph Newton ought to be made to repeat his offer before all the world; even though he should only repeat it to be again refused. The whole of that evening he sat brooding over it, so that he might come to some great resolution.

CHAPTER XLVI.

MR. NEEFIT AGAIN.

THE last few days in March and the first week in April were devoted by Ralph the heir to a final visit to the Moonbeam. He had resolved to finish the hunting season at his old quarters, and then to remove his stud to Newton. The distinction with which he was welcomed by everybody at the Moonbeam must have been very gratifying to him. Though he had made no response whatever to Lieutenant Cox's proposition as to a visit to Newton, that gentleman received him as a hero. Captain Fooks also had escaped from his regiment with the sole object of spending these last days with his dear old friend. Fred Pepper too was very polite, though it was not customary with Mr. Pepper to display friendship so enthusiastic as that which warmed the bosoms of the two military gentlemen. As to Mr. Horsball, one might have thought from his manner that he hoped to engage his customer to remain at the Moonbeam for the rest of his life. But it was not so. It was in Mr. Horsball's nature to be civil to a rich hunting country gentleman; and it was the fact also that

Ralph had ever been popular with the world of the Moonbeam,—even at times when the spasmodic, and at length dilatory, mode of his payment must have become matter for thought to the master of the establishment. There was no doubt about the payments now, and Ralph's popularity was increased fourfold. Mrs. Horsball got out from some secluded nook a special bottle of orange-brandy in his favour,—which Lieutenant Cox would have consumed on the day of its opening, had not Mrs. Horsball with considerable acrimony declined to supply his orders. The sister with ringlets smiled and smirked whenever the young Squire went near the bar. The sister in ringlets was given to flirtations of this kind, would listen with sweetest complacency to compliments on her beauty, and would return them with interest. But she never encouraged this sort of intimacy with gentlemen who did not pay their bills, or with those whose dealings with the house were not of a profitable nature. The man who expected that Miss Horsball would smile upon him because he ordered a glass of sherry and bitters or half-a-pint of pale ale was very much mistaken; but the softness of her smiles for those who consumed the Moonbeam champagne was unbounded. Love and commerce with her ran together, and regulated each other in a manner that was exceedingly advantageous to her brother. If I were about to open such a house as the Moonbeam the first thing I should look for would be a discreet, pleasant-visaged lady to assist me in the bar department, not much under forty, with ringlets, having no particular leaning towards matrimony, who knew how to whisper little speeches while she made a bottle of cherry-brandy serve five-and-twenty turns at the least. She should be honest, patient, graceful, capable of great labour, grasping,—with that wonderful capability of being greedy for the benefit of another which belongs to women,—willing to accept plentiful meals and a power of saving £20 a year as sufficient remuneration for all hardships, with no more susceptibility than a milestone, and as indifferent to delicacy in language as a bargee. There are such women, and very valuable women they are in that trade. Such a one was Miss Horsball, and in these days the sweetest of her smiles were bestowed upon the young Squire.

Ralph Newton certainly liked it, though he assumed an air of laughing at it all. "One would think that old Hossy thought that I am going to go on with this kind of thing," he said one morning to Mr. Pepper as the two of them were standing about near the stable doors with pipes in their mouths. Old Hossy was the affectionate nickname by which Mr. Horsball was known among the hunting men of the B. B. Mr. Pepper and Ralph had already breakfasted, and were dressed for hunting except that they had not yet put on their scarlet coats. The meet was within three miles of their headquarters; the captain and the lieutenant were taking advantage

of the occasion by prolonged slumbers ; and Ralph had passed the morning in discussing hunting matters with Mr. Pepper.

"He don't think that," said Mr. Pepper, taking a very convenient little implement out of his pocket, contrived for purposes of pipe-smoking accommodation. He stopped down his tobacco, and drew the smoke, and seemed by his manner to be giving his undivided attention to his pipe. But that was Mr. Pepper's manner. He was short in speech, but always spoke with a meaning.

"Of course he doesn't really," said Ralph. "I don't suppose I shall ever see the old house again after next week. You see when a man has a place of one's own, if there be hunting there, one is bound to take it ; if there isn't, one can go elsewhere and pick and choose."

"Just so," said Mr. Pepper.

"I like this kind of thing amazingly, you know."

"It has its advantages."

"Oh dear, yes. There is no trouble, you know. Everything done for you. No servants to look after,—except just the fellow who brings you your breeches and rides your second horse." Mr. Pepper never had a second horse, or a man of his own to bring him his breeches, but the allusion did not on that account vex him. "And then you can do what you like a great deal more than you can in a house of your own."

"I should say so," remarked Mr. Pepper.

"I tell you what it is, Fred," continued Ralph, becoming very confidential. "I don't mind telling you, because you are a man who understands things. There isn't such a great pull after all in having a property of your own."

"I shouldn't mind trying it,—just for a year or so," said Mr. Pepper.

"I suppose not," said Ralph, chuckling in his triumph. "And yet there isn't so much in it. What does it amount to when it's all told ? You keep horses for other fellows to ride, you buy wine for other fellows to drink, you build a house for other fellows to live in. You've a deal of business to do, and if you don't mind it you go very soon to the dogs. You have to work like a slave, and everybody gets a pull at you. The chances are you never have any ready money, and become as stingy as an old file. You have to get married because of the family, and the place, and all that kind of thing. Then you have to give dinners to every old fogey, male and female, within twenty miles of you, and before you know where you are you become an old fogey yourself. That's about what it is."

"You ought to know," said Mr. Pepper.

"I've been expecting it all my life,—of course. It was what I was born to, and everybody has been telling me what a lucky fellow I am since I can remember. Now I've got it, and I don't find it

comes to so very much. I shall always look back upon the dear old Moonbeam, and the B B, and Hossy's wonderful port wine with regret. It hasn't been very swell, you know, but it's been uncommonly cosy. Don't you think so?"

"You see I wasn't born to anything better," said Mr. Pepper.

Just at this moment Cox and Fooks came out of the house. They had not as yet breakfasted, but had thought that a mouthful of air in the stable-yard might enable them to get through their toast and red herrings with an amount of appetite which had not as yet been vouchsafed to them. Second and third editions of that wonderful port had been produced on the previous evening, and the two warriors had played their parts with it manfully. Fooks was bearing up bravely as he made his way across the yard; but Cox looked as though his friends ought to see to his making that journey to Australia very soon if they intended him to make it at all. "I'm blessed if you fellows haven't been and breakfasted," said Captain Fooks.

"That's about it," said the Squire.

"You must be uncommon fond of getting up early."

"Do you know who gets the worm?" asked Mr. Pepper.

"Oh, bother that," said Cox.

"There's nothing I hate so much as being told about that nasty worm," said Captain Fooks. "I don't want a worm."

"But the early birds do," said Mr. Pepper.

Captain Fooks was rather given to be cross of mornings. "I think, you know, that when fellows say over night they'll breakfast together, it isn't just the sort of thing for one or two to have all the things brought up at any unconscionable hour they please. Eh, Cox?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said Cox. "I shall just have another go of soda and brandy with a devilled biscuit. That's all I want."

"Fooks had better go to bed again, and see if he can't get out the other side," said Ralph.

"Chaff doesn't mean anything," said Captain Fooks.

"That's as you take it," said Mr. Pepper.

"I shall take it just as I please," said Captain Fooks.

Just at this moment Mr. Horsball came up to them, touching his hat cheerily in sign of the commencement of the day. "You'll ride Mr. Pepper's little 'orse, I suppose, sir?" he said, addressing himself to the young Squire.

"Certainly,—I told Larking I would."

"Exactly, Mr. Newton. And Banker might as well go out as second."

"I said Brewer. Banker was out on Friday."

"That won't be no odds, Mr. Newton. The fact is, Brewer's legs is a little puffed."

"All right," said the Squire.

"Well, old Hossy," said Lieutenant Cox, summing up all his energy in an attempt at matutinal joviality as he slapped the landlord on the back, "how are things going with you?"

Mr. Horsball knew his customers, and did not like being slapped on the back with more than ordinary vigour by such a customer as Lieutenant Cox. "Pretty well, I thank you, Mr. Cox," said he. "I didn't take too much last night, and I eat my breakfast 'earty this morning."

"There is one for you, young man," said Captain Fooks. Whereupon the Squire laughed heartily. Mr. Horsball went on nodding his head, intending to signify his opinion that he had done his work thoroughly; Mr. Pepper, standing on one foot with the other raised on a horse-block, looked on without moving a muscle of his face. The lieutenant was disgusted, but was too weak in his inner man to be capable of instant raillery;—when, on a sudden, the whole aspect of things was changed by the appearance of Mr. Neefit in the yard.

"D——tion!" exclaimed our friend Ralph. The apparition had been so sudden that the Squire was unable to restrain himself. Mr. Neefit, as the reader will perhaps remember, had been at the Moonbeam before. He had written letters which had been answered, and then letters,—many letters,—to which no reply had been given. In respect of the Neefit arrangements Ralph Newton felt himself to be peculiarly ill-used by persecutions such as these, because he had honestly done his best to make Polly his wife. No doubt he acknowledged that fortune had favoured him almost miraculously, in first saving him from so injurious a marriage by the action of the young lady, and then at once bestowing upon him his estate. But the escape was the doing of fortune and Polly Neefit combined, and had not come of any intrigue on his own part. He was in a position,—so he thought,—absolutely to repudiate Neefit, and to throw himself upon facts for his protection;—but then it was undoubtedly the case that for a year or two Mr. Neefit could make his life a burden to him. He would have bought off Neefit at a considerable price, had Neefit been purchaseable. But Neefit was not in this matter greedy for himself. He wanted to make his daughter a lady, and he thought that this was the readiest way to accomplish that object. The Squire, in his unmeasurable disgust, uttered the curse aloud; but then, remembering himself, walked up to the breeches-maker with his extended hand. He had borrowed the man's money. "What's in the wind now, Mr. Neefit?" he said.

"What's in the wind, Captain? Oh, you know. When are you coming to see us at the cottage?"

"I don't think my coming would do any good. I'm not in favour with the ladies there." Ralph was aware that all the men standing

round him had heard the story, and that nothing was to be gained by an immediate attempt at concealment. It behoved him, above all things, to be upon his metal, to put a good face upon it, and to be at any rate equal to the breeches-maker in presence of mind and that kind of courage which he himself would have called "cheek."

"My money was in favour with you, Captain, when you promised as how you would be on the square with me in regard to our Polly."

"Mr. Neefit," said Ralph, speaking in a low voice, but still clearly, so that all around him could hear him, "your daughter and I can never be more to each other than we are at present. She has decided that. But I value her character and good name too highly to allow even you to injure them by such a discussion in a stable-yard." And, having said this, he walked away into the house.

"My Polly's character!" said the infuriated breeches-maker, turning round to the audience, and neglecting to follow his victim in his determination to vindicate his daughter. "If my girl's character don't stand higher nor his or any one's belonging to him I'll eat it!"

"Mr. Newton meant to speak in favour of the young lady, not against her," said Mr. Pepper.

"Then why don't he come out on the square? Now, gents, I'll tell you just the whole of it. He came down to my little box, where I, and my missus, and my girl lives quiet and decent, to borrow money;—and he borrowed it. He won't say as that wasn't so."

"And he's paid you the money back again," said Mr. Pepper.

"He have;—but just you listen. I know you, Mr. Pepper, and all about you; and do you listen. He have paid it back. But when he come there borrowing money, he saw my girl; and, says he,—‘I've got to sell that 'eritance of mine for just what it 'll fetch.’ ‘That's bad, Captain,’ says I. ‘It is bad,’ says he. Then says he again, ‘Neefit, that girl of yours there is the sweetest girl as ever I put my eyes on.’ And so she is,—as sweet as a rose, and as honest as the sun, and as good as gold. I says it as oughtn't; but she is. ‘It's a pity, Neefit,’ says he, ‘about the 'eritance; ain't it?’ ‘Captain,’ says I,—I used to call him Captain 'cause he come down quite familiar like to eat his bit of salmon and drink his glass of wine. Laws,—he was glad enough to come then, mighty grand as he is now."

"I don't think he's grand at all," said Mr. Horsball.

"Well;—do you just listen, gents. ‘Captain,’ says I, ‘that 'eritance of yourn mustn't be sold no how. I says so. What's the figure as is wanted?’ Well; then he went on to say as how Polly was the sweetest girl he ever see;—and so we came to an understanding. He was to have what money he wanted at once, and then £20,000 down when he married Polly. He did have a thousand. And, now,—see what his little game is."

"But the young lady wouldn't have anything to say to him," sug-

gested Captain Fooks, who, even for the sake of his breakfast, could not omit to hear the last of so interesting a conversation.

"Laws, Captain Fooks, to hear the likes of that from you, who is an officer and a gentleman by Act of Parliament! When you have anything sweet to say to a young woman, does she always jump down your throat the first go off?"

"If she don't come at the second time of asking I always go elsewhere," said Captain Fooks.

"Then it's my opinion you have a deal of travelling to do," said Mr. Neefit, "and don't get much at the end of it. It's because he's come in for his 'eritance, which he never would have had only for me, that he's demeaning himself this fashion. It ain't acting the gentleman; it ain't the thing; it's off the square. Only for me and my money there wouldn't be an acre his this blessed minute;—d——d if there would! I saved it for him, by my ready money,—just that I might see my Polly put into a station as she'd make more genteel than she found it. That's what she would;—she has that manners, not to talk of her being as pretty a girl as there is from here to,—to anywheres. He made me a promise, and he shall keep it. I'll worry the heart out of him else. Pay me back my money! Who cares for the money? I can tell guineas with him now, I'll be bound. I'll put it all in the papers,—I will. There ain't a soul shan't know it. I'll put the story of it into the pockets of every pair of breeches as leaves my shop. I'll send it to every M. F. H. in the kingdom."

"You'll about destroy your trade, old fellow," said Mr. Pepper.

"I don't care for the trade, Mr. Pepper. Why have I worked like a 'orse? It's only for my girl."

"I suppose she's not breaking her heart for him?" said Captain Fooks.

"What she's a doing with her heart ain't no business of yours, Captain Fooks. I'm her father, and I know what I'm about. I'll make that young man's life a burden to him, if 'e ain't on the square with my girl. You see if I don't. Mr. 'Orsbull, I want a 'orse to go a'unting on to-day. You lets 'em. Just tell your man to get me a 'orse. I'll pay for him."

"I didn't know you ever did anything in that way," said Mr. Horsball.

"I may begin if I please, I suppose. If I can't go no other way, I'll go on a donkey, and I'll tell every one that's out. Oh, 'e don't know me yet,—don't that young gent."

Mr. Neefit did not succeed in getting any animal out of Mr. Horsball's stables; nor did he make further attempt to carry his last threat into execution on that morning. Mr. Horsball now led the way into the house, while Mr. Pepper mounted his nag. Captain Fooks and Lieutenant Cox went in to their breakfast, and the unfortunate father

followed them. It was now nearly eleven o'clock, and it was found that Ralph's horses had been taken round to the other door, and that he had already started. He said very little to any one during the day, though he was somewhat comforted by information conveyed to him by Mr. Horsball in the course of the afternoon that Mr. Neefit had returned to London. "You send your lawyer to him, Squire," said Mr. Horsball. "Lawyers cost a deal of money, but they do make things straight." This suggestion had also been made to him by his brother Gregory.

On the following day Ralph went up to London, and explained all the circumstances of the case to Mr. Carey. Mr. Carey undertook to do his best to straighten this very crooked episode in his client's life.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE WAY WHICH SHOWS THAT THEY MEAN IT.

IF this kind of thing were to go on, life wouldn't be worth having. That was the feeling of Ralph, the squire of Newton, as he returned on that Saturday from London to the Moonbeam; and so far Mr. Neefit had been successful in carrying out his threat. Neefit had sworn that he would make the young man's life a burden to him, and the burden was already becoming unbearable. Mr. Carey had promised to do something. He would, at any rate, see the infatuated breeches-maker of Conduit Street. In the meantime he had suggested one remedy of which Ralph had thought before,—"If you were married to some one else he'd give it up," Mr. Carey had suggested. That no doubt was true.

Ralph completed his sojourn at the Moonbeam, leaving that place at the end of the first week in April, took a run down to his own place, and then settled himself up to London for the season. His brother Gregory had at this time returned to the parsonage at Newton; but there was an understanding that he was to come up to London and be his brother's guest for the first fortnight in May. Ralph the heir had taken larger rooms, and had a spare chamber. When Ralph had given this invitation, he had expressed his determination of devoting his spring in town to an assiduous courtship of Mary Bonner. At the moment in which he made that assertion down at Newton, the nuisance of the Neefit affair was less intolerable to him than it had since become. He had spoken cheerily of his future prospects, declaring himself to be violently in love with Mary, though he declared at the same time that he had no idea of breaking his heart for any young woman. That last assertion was probably true.

As for living in the great house at the Priory all alone, that he had declared to be impossible. Of course he would be at home for the hunting next winter; but he doubted whether he should be there much before that time, unless a certain coming event should make it necessary for him to go down and look after things. He thought it probable that he should take a run abroad in July; perhaps go to Norway for the fishing in June. He was already making arrangements with two other men for a move in August. He might be at home for partridge shooting about the middle of September, but he shouldn't "go into residence" at Newton before that. Thus he had spoken of it in describing his plans to his brother, putting great stress on his intention to devote the spring months to the lovely Mary. Gregory had seen nothing wrong in all this. Ralph was now a rich man, and was entitled to amuse himself. Gregory would have wished that his brother would at once make himself happy among his own tenants and dependents, but that, no doubt, would come soon. Ralph did spend two nights at Newton after the scene with Neefit in the Moonbeam yard,—just that he might see his nags safe in their new quarters,—and then went up to London. He was hardly yet strong in heart, because such a trouble as that which vexed him in regard to Polly does almost make a man's life a burden. Ralph was gifted with much aptitude for throwing his troubles behind, but he hardly was yet able to rid himself of this special trouble. That horrid tradesman was telling his story to everybody. Sir Thomas Underwood knew the story; and so, he thought, did Mary Bonner. Mary Bonner, in truth, did not know it; but she had thrown in Ralph's teeth, as an accusation against him, that he owed himself and his affections to another girl; and Ralph, utterly forgetful of Clarissa and that now long-distant scene on the lawn, had believed, and still did believe, that Mary had referred to Polly Neefit. On the 10th of April he established himself at his new rooms in Spring Gardens, and was careful in seeing that there was a comfortable little bedroom for his brother Greg. His uncle had now been dead just six months, but he felt as though he had been the owner of the Newton estate for years. If Mr. Carey could only settle for him that trouble with Mr. Neefit, how happy his life would be to him. He was very much in love with Mary Bonner, but his trouble with Mr. Neefit was of almost more importance to him than his love for Mary Bonner.

In the meantime the girls were living, as usual, at Popham Villa, and Sir Thomas was living, as usual, in Southampton Buildings. He and his colleague had been unseated, but it had already been decided by the House of Commons that no new writ should be at once issued, and that there should be a commission appointed to make extended inquiry at Pereycross in reference to the contemplated disfranchisement of the borough. There could be no possible connexion between this inquiry and the expediency of Sir Thomas

living at home ; but, after some fashion, he reconciled further delay to his conscience by the fact that the Percycross election was not even yet quite settled. No doubt it would be necessary that he should again go to Percycross during the sitting of the Commission.

The reader will remember the interview between Gregory Newton and Clarissa, in which poor Clary had declared with so much emphasis her certainty that his brother's suit to Mary must be fruitless. This she had said, with artless energy, in no degree on her own behalf. She was hopeless now in that direction, and had at last taught herself to feel that the man was unworthy. The lesson had reached her, though she herself was ignorant not only of the manner of the teaching, but of the very fact that she had been taught. She had pleaded, more than once, that men did such things, and were yet held in favour and forgiven, let their iniquities have been what they might. She had hoped to move others by the doctrine ; but gradually it had ceased to be operative, even on herself. She could not tell how it was that her passion faded and died away. It can hardly be said that it died away ; but it became to herself grievous and a cause of soreness, instead of a joy and a triumph. She no longer said, even to herself, that he was to be excused. He had come there, and had made a mere plaything of her,—wilfully. There was no earnestness in him, no manliness, and hardly common honesty. A conviction that it was so had crept into her poor wounded heart, in spite of those repeated assertions which she had made to Patience as to the persistency of her own affection. First dismay and then wrath had come upon her when the man who ought to be her lover came to the very house in which she was living, and there offered his hand to another girl, almost in her very presence. Had the sin been committed elsewhere, and with any rival other than her own cousin, she might have still clung to that doctrine of forgiveness, because the sinner was a man, and because it is the way of the world to forgive men. But the insult had been too close for pardon ; and now her wrath was slowly changing itself to contempt. Had Mary accepted the man's offer this phase of feeling would not have occurred. Clarissa would have hated the woman, but still might have loved the man. But Mary had treated him as a creature absolutely beneath her notice, had evidently despised him, and Mary's scorn communicated itself to Clarissa. The fact that Ralph was now Newton of Newton, absolutely in harbour after so many dangers of shipwreck, assisted her in this. "I would have been true to him, though he hadn't had a penny," she said to herself : "I would never have given him up though all the world had been against him." Debts, difficulties, an inheritance squandered, idle habits, even profligacy, should not have torn him from her heart, had he possessed the one virtue of meaning what he said when he told her that he loved her. She remembered the noble triumph she had felt when

she declared to Mary that that other Ralph, who was to have been Mary's lover, was welcome to the fine property. Her sole ambition had been to be loved by this man; but the man had been incapable of loving her. She herself was pretty, and soft, bright on occasions, and graceful. She knew so much of herself; and she knew, also, that Mary was far prettier than herself, and more clever. This young man to whom she had devoted herself possessed no power of love for an individual,—no capability of so joining himself to another human being as to feel, that in spite of any superiority visible to the outside world, that one should be esteemed by him superior to all others,—because of his love. The young man had liked prettiness and softness and grace and feminine nicenesses; and seeing one who was prettier and more graceful,—all which poor Clary allowed, though she was not so sure about the softness and niceness,—had changed his aim without an effort! Ah, how different was poor Gregory!

She thought much of Gregory, reminding herself that as was her sorrow in regard to her own crushed hopes, so were his. His hopes, too, had been crushed, because she had been so obdurate to him. But she had never been false. She had never whispered a word of love to Gregory. It might be that his heart was as sore, but he had not been injured as she had been injured. She despised the owner of Newton Priory. She would scorn him should he come again to her and throw himself at her feet. But Gregory could not despise her. She had, indeed, preferred the bad to the good. There had been lack of judgment. But there had been on her side no lack of truth. Yes;—she had been wrong in her choice. Her judgment had been bad. And yet how glorious he had looked as he lay upon the lawn, hot from his rowing, all unbraced, brown and bold and joyous as a young god, as he bade her go and fetch him drink to slake his thirst! How proud, then, she had been to be ordered by him, as though their mutual intimacies and confidences and loves were sufficient, when they too were alone together, to justify a reversal of those social rules by which the man is ordered to wait upon the woman. There is nothing in the first flush of acknowledged love that is sweeter to the woman than this. All the men around her are her servants; but in regard to this man she may have the inexpressibly greater pleasure of serving him herself. Clarissa had now thought much of these things, and had endeavoured to define to herself what had been those gifts belonging to Ralph which had won from her her heart. He was not, in truth, handsomer than his brother Gregory, was certainly less clever, was selfish in small things from habit, whereas Gregory had no thought for his own comfort. It had all come from this,—that a black coat and a grave manner of life and serious pursuits had been less alluring to her idleness and pleasure. It had suited her that her young god should be joyous.

unbraced, brown, bold, and thirsty. She did not know Pope's famous line, but it all lay in that. She was innocent, pure, unknowing in the ways of vice, simple in her tastes, conscientious in her duties, and yet she was a rake at heart,—till at last sorrow and disappointment taught her that it is not enough that a man should lie loose upon the grass with graceful negligence and call for soda-water with a pleasant voice. Gregory wore black clothes, was sombre, and was a parson ;—but, oh, what a thing it is that a man should be true at heart !

She said nothing of her changing feelings to Mary, or even to Patience. The household at this time was not very gay or joyous. Sir Thomas, after infinite vexation, had lost the seat of which they had all been proud. Mary Bonner's condition was not felt to be deplorable, as was that of poor Clary, and she certainly did not carry herself as a lovelorn maiden. Of Mary Bonner it may be said that no disappointment of that kind would affect her outward manner; nor would she in any strait of love be willing to make a confidence or to discuss her feelings. Whatever care of that kind might be present to her would be lightened, if not made altogether as nothing, by her conviction that such loads should be carried in silence, and without any visible sign to the world that the muscles are overtaxed. But it was known that the banished Ralph had, in the moment of his expected prosperity, declared his purpose of giving all that he had to give to this beauty, and it was believed that she would have accepted the gift. It had, therefore, come to pass that the name of neither Ralph could be mentioned at the cottage, and that life among these maidens was sober, sedate, and melancholy. At last there came a note from Sir Thomas to Patience. "I shall be home to dinner to-morrow. I found the enclosed from R. N. this morning. I suppose he must come. Affectionately, T. U." The enclosed note was as follows :—"Dear Sir Thomas, I called this morning, but old Stemm was as hard as granite. If you do not object I will run down to the villa to-morrow. If you are at home I will stay and dine. Yours ever, Ralph Newton."

The mind of Sir Thomas when he received this had been affected exactly as his words described. He had supposed that Ralph must come. He had learned to hold his late ward in low esteem. The man was now beyond all likelihood of want, and sailing with propitious winds ; but Sir Thomas, had he been able to consult his own inclinations, would have had no more to do with him. And yet the young Squire had not done anything which, as Sir Thomas thought, would justify him in closing his doors against one to whom he had been bound in a manner peculiarly intimate. However, if his niece should choose at last to accept Ralph, the match would be very brilliant ; and the uncle thought that it was not his duty to interfere between her and so great an advantage. Sir Thomas, in truth, did

not as yet understand Mary Bonner,—knew very little of her character; but he did know that it was incumbent on him to give her some opportunity of taking her beauty to market. He wrote a line to Ralph, saying that he himself would dine at home on the day indicated.

“Impossible!” said Clary, when she was first told.

“You may be sure he’s coming,” said Patience.

“Then I shall go and spend the day with Mrs. Brownlow. I cannot stand it.”

“My dear, he’ll know why you are away.”

“Let him know,” said Clarissa. And she did as she said she would. When Sir Thomas came home at about four o’clock on the Thursday which Ralph had fixed,—Thursday, the fourteenth of April,—he found that Clarissa had flown. The fly was to be sent for her at ten, and it was calculated that by the time she returned, Ralph would certainly have taken his leave. Sir Thomas expressed neither anger nor satisfaction at this arrangement,—“Oh; she has gone to Mrs. Brownlow’s, has she? Very well. I don’t suppose it will make much difference to Ralph.” “None in the least,” said Patience, severely. “Nothing of that kind will make any difference to him.” But at that time Ralph had been above an hour in the house.

We will now return to Ralph and his adventures. He had come up to London with the express object of pressing his suit upon Mary Bonner; but during his first day or two in London had busied himself rather with the affairs of his other love. He had been with Mr. Carey, and Mr. Carey had been with Mr. Neefit. “He is the maddest old man that I ever saw,” said Mr. Carey. “When I suggested to him that you were willing to make any reasonable arrangement,—meaning a thousand pounds, or something of that kind,—I couldn’t get him to understand me at all.”

“I don’t think he wants money,” said Ralph.

“‘Let him come down and eat a bit of dinner at the cottage,’ said he, ‘and we’ll make it all square.’ Then I offered him a thousand pounds down.”

“What did he say?”

“Called to a fellow he had there with a knife in his hand, cutting leather, to turn me out of the shop. And the man would have done it, too, if I hadn’t gone.”

This was not promising, but on the following morning Ralph received a letter which put him into better heart. The letter was from Polly herself, and was written as follows:—

“Alexandra Cottage, Hendon,
April 10th, 186—.

“MY DEAR SIR,

“Father has been going on with all that nonsense of his, and I think it most straightforward to write a letter to you at once, so

that things may be understood and finished. Father has no right to be angry with you, anyway not about me. He says somebody has come and offered him money. I wish they hadn't, but perhaps you didn't send them. There's no good in father talking about you and me. Of course it was a great honour, and all that, but I'm not at all sure that anybody should try to get above themselves, not in the way of marrying. And the heart is everything. So I've told father. If ever I bestow mine, I think it will be to somebody in a way of business,—just like father. So I thought I would just write to say that there couldn't be anything between you and me, were it ever so; only that I was very much honoured by your coming down to Margate. I write this to you, because a very particular friend advises me, and I don't mind telling you at once,—it is Mr. Moggs. And I shall show it to father. That is, I have written it twice, and shall keep the other. It's a pity father should go on so, but he means it for the best. And as to anything in the way of money,—oh, Mr. Newton, he's a deal too proud for that.

“Yours truly,

“MARYANNE NEEFIT.”

As to which letter the little baggage was not altogether true in one respect. She did not keep a copy of the whole letter, but left out of that which she showed to her father the very material passage in which she referred to the advice of her particular friend, Mr. Moggs. Ralph, when he received this letter, felt really grateful to Polly, and wrote to her a pretty note, in which he acknowledged her kindness, and expressed his hope that she might always be as happy as she deserved to be. Then it was that he made up his mind to go down at once to Popham Villa, thinking that the Neefit nuisance was sufficiently abated to enable him to devote his time to a more pleasurable pursuit.

He reached the villa between three and four, and learned from the gardener's wife at the lodge that Sir Thomas had not as yet returned. He did not learn that Clarissa was away, and was not aware of that fact till they all sat down to dinner at seven o'clock. Much had been done and much endured before that time came. He sauntered slowly up the road, and looked about the grounds, hoping to find the young ladies there, as he had so often done during his summer visits; but there was no one to be seen, and he was obliged to knock at the door. He was shown into the drawing-room, and in a few minutes Patience came to him. There had been no arrangement between her and Mary as to the manner in which he should be received. Mary on a previous occasion had given him an answer, and really did believe that that would be sufficient. He was, according to her thinking, a light, inconstant man, who would hardly give himself the labour necessary for perseverance in any suit. Patience at once

began to ask him after his brother and the doings at the Priory. He had been so intimate at the house, and so dear to them all, that in spite of the disapprobation with which he was now regarded by them, it was impossible that there should not be some outer kindness. "Ah," said he, "I do so look forward to the time when you will all be down there. I have been so often welcome at your house, that it will be my greatest pleasure to make you welcome there."

"We go so little from home," said Patience.

"But I am sure you will come to me. I know you would like to see Greg's parsonage and Greg's church."

"I should indeed."

"It is the prettiest church, I think, in England, and the park is very nice. The whole house wants a deal of doing to, but I shall set about it some day. I don't know a pleasanter neighbourhood anywhere." It would have been so natural that Patience should tell him that he wanted a mistress for such a home; but she could not say the words. She could not find the proper words, and soon left him, muttering something as to directions for her father's room.

He had been alone for twenty minutes when Mary came into the room. She knew that Patience was not there; and had retreated up-stairs. But there seemed to be a cowardice in such retreating, which displeased herself. She, at any rate, had no cause to be afraid of Mr. Newton. So she collected her thoughts, and arranged her gait, and went down, and addressed him with assumed indifference,—as though there had never been anything between them beyond simple acquaintance. "Uncle Thomas will be here soon, I suppose," she said.

"I hope he will give me half-an-hour first," Ralph answered. There was an ease and grace always present in his intercourse with women, and a power of saying that which he desired to say,—which perhaps arose from the slightness of his purposes and the want of reality in his character.

"We see so little of him that we hardly know his hours," said Mary. "Uncle Thomas is a sad truant from home."

"He always was, and I declare I think that Patience and Clary have been the better for it. They have learned things of which they would have known nothing had he been with them every morning and evening. I don't know any girls who are so sweet as they are. You know they have been like sisters to me."

"So I have been told."

"And when you came, it would have been like another sister coming; only—"

"Only what?" said Mary, assuming purposely a savage look.

"That something else intervened."

"Of course it must be very different,—and it should be different. You have only known me a few months."

"I have known you enough to wish to know you more closely than anybody else for the rest of my life."

"Mr. Newton, I thought you had understood me before."

"So I did." This he said with an assumed tone of lachrymose complaint. "I did understand you,—thoroughly. I understood that I was rebuked, and rejected, and disdained. But a man, if he is in earnest, does not give over on that account. Indeed, there are things which he can't give over. You may tell a man that he shouldn't drink, or shouldn't gamble; but telling will do no good. When he has once begun, he'll go on with it."

"What does that mean?"

"That love is as strong a passion, at any rate, as drinking or gambling. You did tell me, and sent me away, and rebuked me because of that tradesman's daughter."

"What tradesman's daughter?" asked Mary. "I have spoken of no tradesman's daughter. I gave you ample reason why you should not address yourself to me."

"Of course there are ample reasons," said Ralph, looking into his hat, which he had taken from the table. "The one,—most ample of all, is that you do not care for me."

"I do not," said Mary resolutely.

"Exactly;—but that is a sort of reason which a man will do his best to conquer. Do not misunderstand me. I am not such a fool as to think that I can prevail in a day. I am not vain enough to think that I can prevail at all. But I can persist."

"It will not be of the slightest use; indeed, it cannot be allowed. I will not allow it. My uncle will not allow it."

"When you told me that I was untrue to another person——; I think that was your phrase."

"Very likely."

"I supposed you had heard that stupid story which had got round to my uncle,—about a Mr. Neefit's daughter."

"I had heard no stupid story."

"What then did you mean?"

Mary paused a moment, thinking whether it might still be possible that a good turn might be done for her cousin. That Clarissa had loved this man with her whole heart she had herself owned to Mary. That the man had professed his love for Clary, Clary had also let her know. And Clary's love had endured even after the blow it had received from Ralph's offer to her cousin. All this that cousin knew; but she did not know how that love had now turned to simple soreness. "I have heard nothing of the man's daughter," said Mary.

"Well then?"

"But I do know that before I came here at all you had striven to gain the affections of my cousin."

"Clarissa!"

"Yes; Clarissa. Is it not so?" Then she paused, and Ralph remembered the scene on the lawn. In very truth it had never been forgotten. There had always been present with him when he thought of Mary Bonner a sort of remembrance of the hour in which he had played the fool with dear Clary. He had kissed her. Well; yes; and with some girls kisses mean so much,—as Polly Neefit had said to her true lover. But then with others they mean just nothing. "If you want to find a wife in this house you had better ask her. It is certainly useless that you should ask me."

"Do you mean quite useless?" asked Ralph, beginning to be somewhat abashed.

"Absolutely useless. Did I not tell you something else,—something that I would not have hinted to you, had it not been that I desired to prevent the possibility of a renewal of anything so vain? But you think nothing of that! All that can be changed with you at a moment, if other things suit."

"That is meant to be severe, Miss Bonner, and I have not deserved it from you. What has brought me to you but that I admire you above all others?"

"You shouldn't admire me above others. Is a man to change as he likes because he sees a girl whose hair pleases him for the moment better than does hers to whom he has sworn to be true?" Ralph did not forget at this moment to whisper to himself for his own consolation, that he had never sworn to be true to Clarissa. And, indeed, he did feel, that though there had been a kiss, the scene on the lawn was being used unfairly to his prejudice. "I am afraid you are very fickle, Mr. Newton, and that your love is not worth much."

"I hope we may both live till you learn that you have wronged me."

"I hope so. If my opinion be worth anything with you, go back to her from whom you have allowed yourself to stray in your folly. To me you must not address yourself again. If you do, it will be an insult." Then she rose up, queenly in her beauty, and slowly left the room.

There must be an end of that. Such was Ralph's feeling as she left the room, in spite of those protestations of constancy and persistency which he had made to himself. "A fellow has to go on with it, and be refused half a dozen times by one of those proud ones," he had said; "but when they do knuckle under, they go in harness better than the others." It was thus that he had thought of Mary Bonner, but he did not so think of her now. No, indeed. There was an end of that. "There is a sort of way of doing it, which shows that they mean it." Such was his inward speech; and he did believe that Miss Bonner meant it. "By Jove, yes; if words and looks ever can mean anything." But how about Clarissa? If it was

so, as Mary Bonner had told him, would it be the proper kind of thing for him to go back to Clarissa? His heart, too,—for he had a heart,—was very soft. He had always been fond of Clarissa, and would not, for worlds, that she should be unhappy. How pretty she was, and how soft, and how loving! And how proudly happy she would be to be driven about the Newton grounds by him as their mistress. Then he remembered what Gregory had said to him, and how he had encouraged Gregory to persevere. If anything of that kind were to happen, Gregory must put up with it. It was clear that Clarissa couldn't marry Gregory if she were in love with him. But how would he look Sir Thomas in the face? As he thought of this he laughed. Sir Thomas, however, would be glad enough to give his daughter, not to the heir but to the owner of Newton. Who could be that fellow whom Mary Bonner preferred to him—with all Newton to back his suit? Perhaps Mary Bonner did not know the meaning of being the mistress of Newton Priory.

After a while the servant came to show him to his chamber. Sir Thomas had come and had gone at once to his room. So he went upstairs and dressed, expecting to see Clarissa when they all assembled before dinner. When he went down, Sir Thomas was there, and Mary, and Patience,—but not Clarissa. He had summoned back his courage and spoke jauntily to Sir Thomas. Then he turned to Patience and asked after her sister. "Clarissa is spending the day with Mrs. Brownlow," said Patience, "and will not be home till quite late."

"Oh, how unfortunate!" exclaimed Ralph. Taking all his difficulties into consideration, we must admit that he did not do it badly.

After dinner Sir Thomas sat longer over his wine than is at present usual, believing, perhaps, that the young ladies would not want to see much more of Ralph on the present occasion. The conversation was almost entirely devoted to the affairs of the late election, as to which Ralph was much interested and very indignant. "They cannot do you any harm, sir, by the investigation," he said.

"No; I don't think they can hurt me."

"And you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you have been the means of exposing corruption, and of helping to turn such a man as Griffenbottom out of the House. Upon my word, I think it has been worth while."

"I am not sure that I would do it again at the same cost, and with the same object," said Sir Thomas.

Ralph did have a cup of tea given to him in the drawing-room, and then left the villa before Clarissa's fly had returned.

